PLUS: Ron Suskind on what *really* tamed Gadhafi

Washington MONTHLY

Time For Us To Go

Conservatives on why the GOP should lose in '06.

Essays by:

Christopher Buckley
Joe Scarborough
Richard Viguerie
William Niskanen
Bruce Bartlett
Jeffrey Hart
Bruce Fein

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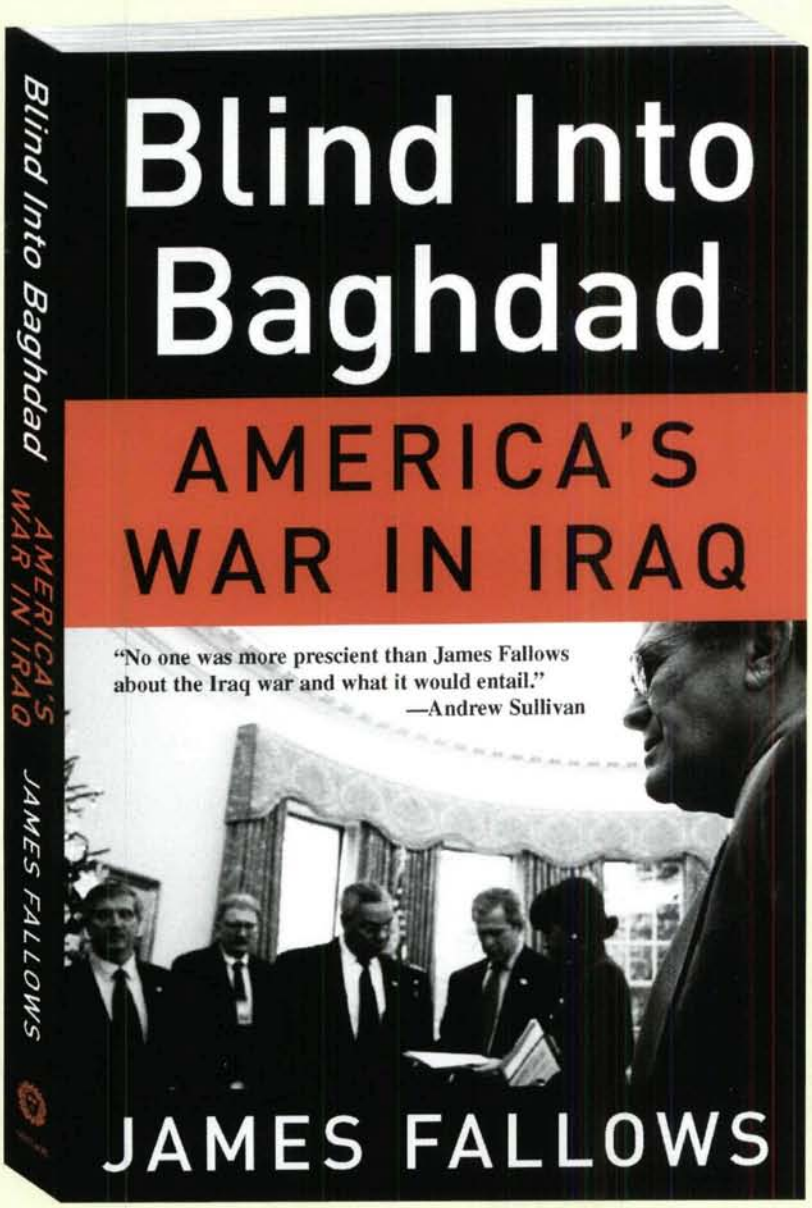

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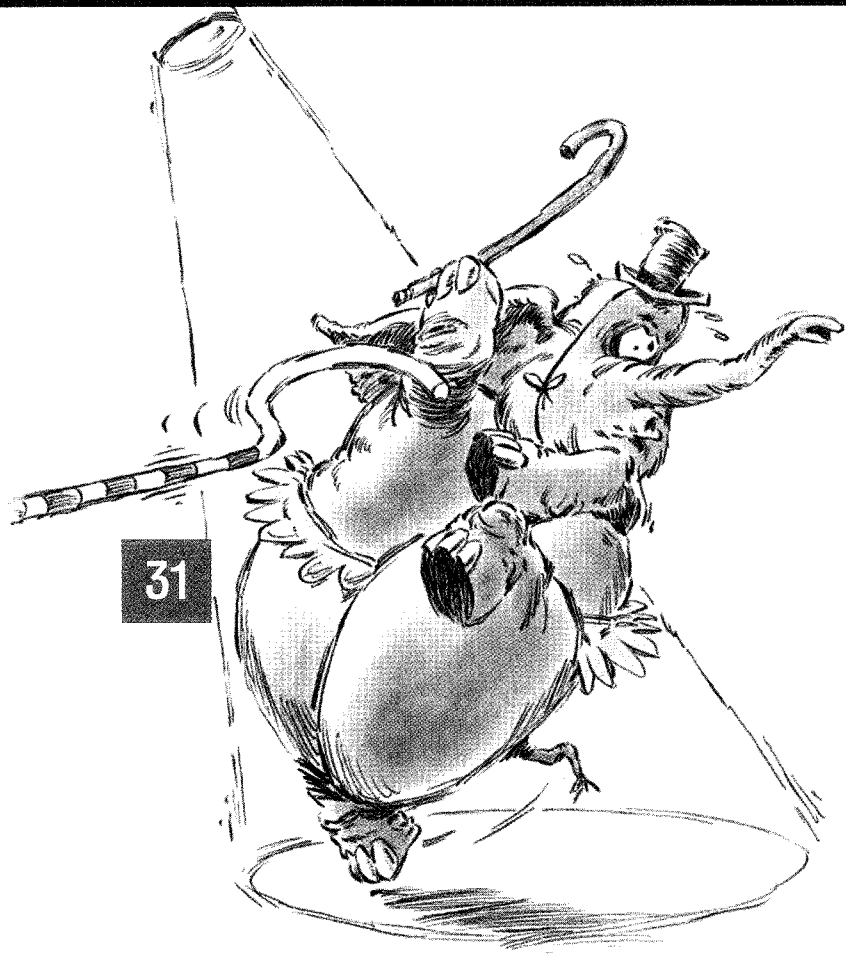

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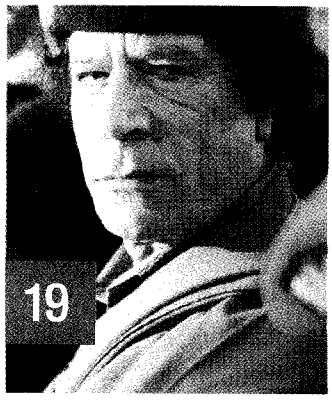

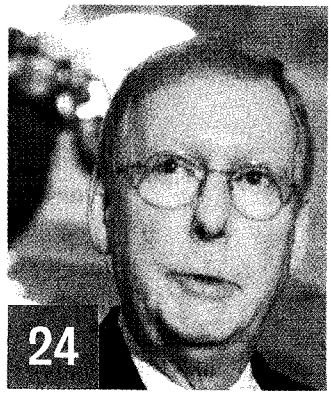

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Subscription Rates: U.S. and possessions: one year, $44.95; two years, $79.95; three years, $109.95. For Canadian and foreign subscriptions, add $10 for surface delivery; air mail delivery add $32. Back issues, $5. The Washington Monthly is indexed in the Book Review Index, Political Science Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service, the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, and Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory and may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Published monthly except combined Jan./Feb. and July/Aug. issues by The Washington Monthly, LLC, wholly owned by W.M. Corporation, a District of Columbia non-profit corporation.

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Editorial offices: 13 19 F Street, NW, Suite 710, Washington, DC 20004; tel: 202-393-5155 / fax: 202-393-2444
Publishing offices: 916 Kearny Street, San Francisco, CA 94133; tel: 415-402-0252 / fax: 415-402-0922

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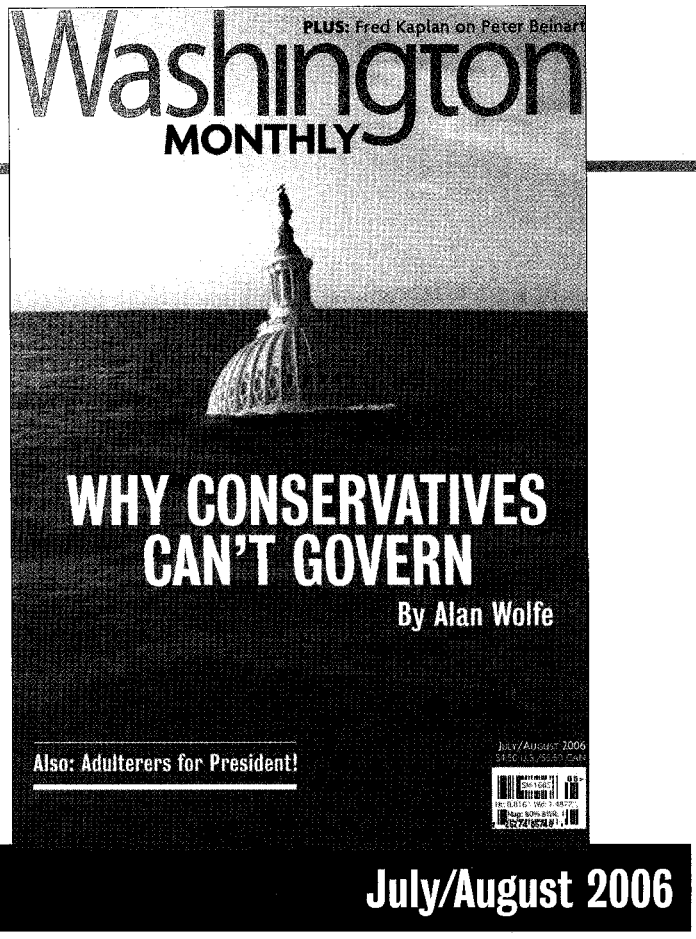
LETTERS



Conservative incompetence

Great article ("Why Conservatives Can't Govern," by Alan Wolfe, July/August). Though perhaps overly harsh, it seems to accurately depict the majority of the Republican conservatives who currently rule the country.

I was once a Republican, and considered myself a conservative, meaning that I was in favor of limited government and personal and fiscal responsibility. I'm no longer a Republican and no longer consider myself a conservative, and am outraged at how those in power absolve themselves of fiscal and personal responsibility.

STEVE EVANGELOU
Walnut Creek, Calif.

Alan Wolfe argues that "Refusing to acknowledge the importance of government while relying on it to achieve your objective causes the same kind of chaos in foreign policy that it does in matters closer to home."

Bush's Iraq is a mess, Wolfe argues, not because government does as poor a job at social engineering in Baghdad as in the United States, but because Republicans lack Tinkerbell's belief in the effectiveness of government. Unlike, say Lyndon Johnson's masterful handling of the Vietnam War, Jimmy Carter's deft use of Keynesian economics to provide low inflation and economic growth, Bill Clinton's Churchillian handling of Somalia and al Qaeda, Sudan, and Haiti. Or former California governor Grey Davis' handling of California, Louisiana Gov. Blanco and New Orleans Mayor Nagin's recent lessons in effective Democratic governance. And *The Washington Monthly* is named after a city that is governed by people who truly, truly believe in the wonderfulness of big government.

Ronald Reagan expected and asked the government to do less. Inflation fell from double digits. Over 44 million jobs have been created since January of 1981. Less regulation and lower taxes brought in more revenue. He broke the neck of the Soviet Union without a war or occupation, but by cutting off loans, and doing small but critical things in Nicaragua, Angola, Afghanistan, and Eastern Europe.

Bush has asked the government to do a very big and complicated thing in Iraq. The left wants government to do many big things all at once. But government is like a baseball bat. Fine for killing things and smashing up the place: Tokyo 1945, Berlin 1945, Iraq 1991 and 2003. But when you ask government to do an appendectomy with said baseball bat it leaves blood all over the floor and it doesn't work out well for the patient.

Big government doesn't work well. The East Germans really truly believed. There was no lack of faith in government in the Politburo. Limited government can do the limited number of things that governments can do if they are not constantly distracted by trying to do the impossible with the blunt force of the state as their tool.

GROVER NORQUIST
President, Americans for Tax Reform
Washington, D.C.

> "This president was given an unprecedented opportunity to be one of our great presidents."

Alan Wolfe brought back memories of my years as a visiting scientist at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda in the 1990s. Believing that I was entering an environment where research would be the highest priority, I

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was astounded to learn that I'd entered a bizarre parallel universe managed by bureaucrats whose first priority was to play it safe by doing nothing—absolutely nothing—that wasn't the least bit outside of their own literal interpretation of their job description. The whole place barely functioned: It took months to do the same work done in days or weeks in the "real world," new equipment would be purchased when perfectly good equipment was being surplused by the lab next door because it was next to impossible to requisition it, and it was a daily struggle to even find someone in administration who could accurately write down a message. (I once spent the better part of an hour arguing with someone in the purchasing office in a vain attempt to make them understand that there could be more than one scientific equipment supplier with the name Nippon in its title, and that therefore there could be companies beginning with the term Nippon but with different addresses and fax numbers).

However, the most demoralizing part of the job wasn't necessarily fighting the daily hassles but the sheer lack of interest among my American-born colleagues in trying to do anything to improve the system. In both my lab and the surrounding ones, only those of us visiting from other countries (Canada, Finland, France, and Taiwan) ever tried to appeal to the higher-ups to make the system work better. Almost without exception, the American-born scientists believed it to be a waste of time to try to argue with the bureaucracy, that government was always inefficient, always had been inefficient, and always would be inefficient, and that we were naive, somewhat immature, foreigners for believing otherwise.

I've since returned to my native Canada, where taxes are higher and government bureaucracy is a greater part of everyday life. On the other hand, I am surrounded by fellow citizens who believe that government doesn't have to be wasteful, and that they have the power (and duty) as citizens to pound their fists on a desk or a countertop and call their Members of Parliament to demand that inefficiencies in the system be fixed—immediately. This system doesn't make everything perfect, but it sure feels more like democracy and freedom than does simply resigning yourself to the evils of government.

Glenn Ward, Ph.D.
Department of Health Studies and Gerontology, University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Canada

This is something I have believed for a very long time, though I see it more as an indifference to what progressives think of as good government, rather than classic incompetence. I doubt the individuals and corporations benefiting from the Bush administration's policies consider them incompetent. I do not understand why this hasn't been worked more by Democrats, which is to say, what this administration is doing, it is doing very well—but what it is doing does not really conform to the view of America most people cherish. I think it is true that the fall in the President's poll numbers was precipitated by and given momentum by the torture revelations, the assault on Social Security, intrusion into the Schiavo case, the Katrina debacle, the prescription-drug benefit debacle, the port and border security debacle, and the realization that the Iraq expedition was making us less secure by inflaming the animosities of the Islamic peoples. All of these points reflect deliberate conservative administration polices.

This president was given an unprecedented opportunity to be one of our great presidents. Though put into office under questionable circumstances, the country rightfully stood behind him, giving him broad authority to deal with the threat realized on 9/11. Rather than building on the unifying result of that day, he chose to follow the narrow path of radical ideology, and to gratify the desires of a narrow constituency. I believe the low poll numbers reflect the failure of this president and his administration to measure up to the call for inspired leadership; but more so, they reflect the failure of the conservative principles practiced by this president.

Nicholas Morris
Via email

China hawk talk

Soyoung Ho's profile of me ("Panda Slugger," July/August) is startlingly at odds with the interviews I granted, in hope of correcting her personal and substantive preconceptions. In fact, the article reflects a severe misunderstanding of the entire China policy debate.

I served as a researcher and consultant to the Defense Department for the entire Clinton administration, in the same way that I do today for the current administration. That unmentioned detail is significant since the books and reports in which she detects a rigid ideological slant against China were written during the Clinton years, and include jacket blurbs from Democrats. Indeed, my second book has been translated into Chinese and published in China by Xinhua Press, part of the government of China. Throughout, my scholarship has been about how Chinese authors debate strategic concepts, not what China will do or become some day. Other than name-calling, she does not explain how such work ties me to Secretary Rumsfeld or the White House "neocons."

The nuances of the China policy debate are complex, and need to be discussed precisely. Labeling me as this administration's "Ahmed Chalabi" Cassandra of China policy is silly. Of course she has no evidence of any encouragement let alone plan to invade China. In fact, the reader would never learn that Congressional Democrats are at the forefront of accusing the President of being "soft" on China. As I explained to Ms. Ho, I support the recent policy recommendations on China by both Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid (a letter in April 2006 on his Senate website) and House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (on her web site in 2005) on China.

Ms. Ho also fails to mention my most recent report, presented at Stanford last year, that focuses on technological competitiveness, and which cites favorably the comments on the National Science Foundation budget of Democratic Sen. Barbara Mikulski and House Science Committee ranking Democrat Bart Gordon, and other Democrats about the need to improve U.S. competitiveness in science.

All my recent reports are online—sponsored by the Congressional China

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Commission, a bipartisan commission set up by Sen. Robert Byrd in 2001, perhaps President Bush's harshest critic. Regrettably, your reporter is indulging in stereotype and name-calling, not serious journalism.

My personal concerns aside, for a respected magazine such as *The Washington Monthly* to use smears when examining America's China policy is unhelpful. As I carefully told Ms. Ho, I agree with Admiral Fallon and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, Gen. Peter Pace, that there is no immediate China threat. Given that I signed the 2003 Council on Foreign Relations' task force report with 50 other experts who concluded that China is 20 years behind the U.S. in military technology, it is all the stranger that Ms. Ho took it upon herself to reverse my arguments, presenting me as a scaremonger.

For example, Ms. Ho reports that I needlessly fear that China has an "Assassin's Mace" weapons program to attack the U.S.—and that I mistranslated this common term which she says really means "kick-ass weapons." But I never expressed such dread of what is in fact a mere future concept, not real weapons today.

In conclusion, your readers are entitled to ask why a South Korean national—member of a prominent South Korean diplomatic family—has made so many serious distortions of serious (and often bipartisan) Sino-American analysis, let alone of my own viewpoints which apparently have been welcome by Clinton and Bush Pentagon officials alike. That background and bias is worth disclosing when trying to handle these contentious, history-laden policy problems.

MICHAEL PILLSBURY
Washington, D.C.

Biting the bullet

I want to thank you for turning your attention to malaria control ("Fatal Inaction," by Joshua Kurlantzick, July/August).

However I strongly disagree with Mr. Kurlantzick's assessment that, "the preoccupation with DDT is largely a distraction ... that has hampered efforts to provide better access to antimalarial drugs," specifically ACTs, which he argues are the real silver bullet.

First, environmental leaders most certainly do not all agree that the pesticide should be used to combat malaria, as Mr. Kurlantzick claims. Many oppose its use, and the European Union has taken the unconscionable public stance that if Uganda and other East African countries begin spraying with DDT, they can expect trade sanctions. If the EU is truly concerned about the chemical leaking into agriculture, it might instead offer to help control its application in those countries. If it is truly concerned about human life, it would support every effort to combat this terrible disease.

Second, few in the malaria control business argue that DDT is a silver bullet. It is one of many effective weapons against the disease, but it is not being employed because of wholly unscientific claims. DDT is unique in its ability to repel mosquitoes before they enter a home, and it lasts longer —so less has to be applied fewer times in a year to achieve the same effect as other insecticides. This is a significant competitive advantage for poor communities that have limited resources and are at the mercy of constant or seasonal malaria.

Unlike claims that DDT is harmful to humans, the facts I cite here have been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

Third, by arguing that ACTs are a silver bullet against malaria, Mr. Kurlantzick neglects the valuable role prevention plays in bringing malaria or any infectious disease under control. Fewer mosquitoes biting people means fewer infections, fewer parasites regenerating and circulating in a given community, fewer cases of malaria to treat, which means stronger, healthier communities, and improved ability to get scarce new drugs to victims. Simply put, effective prevention makes treatment dollars go farther. By any account, the most effective prevention methods available should be used and, by any scientific account, that means spraying with DDT, as well as passing out bed nets.

Mr. Kurlantzick and others might point to my emphasis on DDT and not bed nets as an unbalanced treatment of malaria prevention. The fact is bed nets, unlike DDT, are universally supported by donors and environmental leaders, in many cases to the exclusion of spraying with insecticides.

I appreciate both Mr. Kurlantzick and your publication's attention to malaria control. However there is no silver bullet, so we must use every available weapon to bring malaria under control.

PHILIP COTICELLI
Africa Fighting Malaria

Presidential affairs

Best piece ever on this subject ("High Infidelity," July/August). Well written, inclusive, most certainly balanced. About the only person he missed was George H. W. Bush's purported affair.

Mr. Benen brings to mind the level to which American political campaigns have sunk. I would like to think voters are more concerned with getting out of a war, stabilizing the economy, health care, education and feeding the poor, rather than who is sleeping, or at least playing touch and giggle, with whom.

RICHARD L. FRICKER
Tulsa, Okla.

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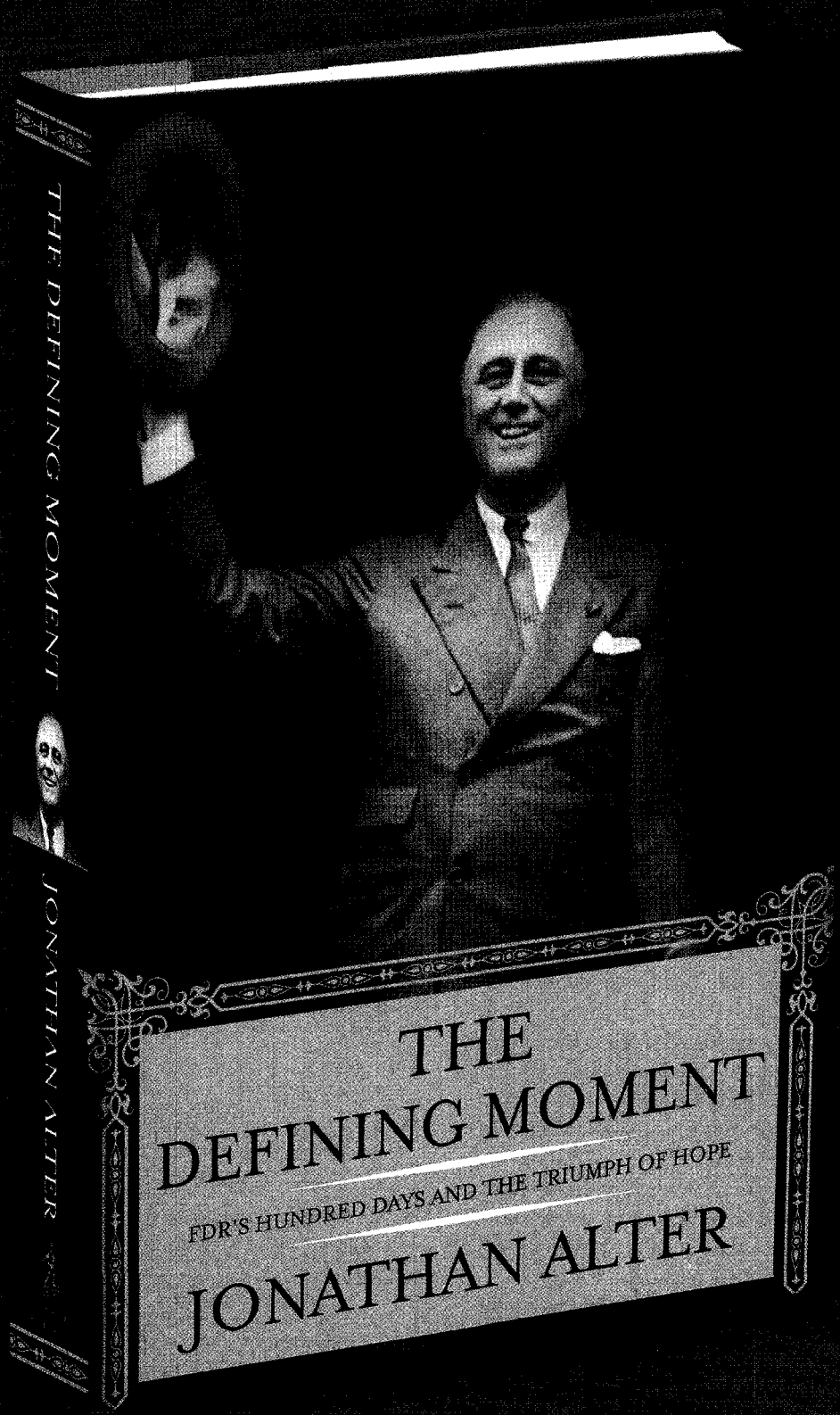

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TILTING at WINDMILLS

By Charles Peters

Lessons from TR

Karl Rove recently wrote an essay for *Time* magazine on the lessons to be learned from the life of Teddy Roosevelt. One lesson was not mentioned by Rove. Roosevelt not only served in the Spanish-American War, leading the famous charge up San Juan Hill, but offered to serve in World War I. All of his sons served in that war. Theodore Jr. was seriously wounded in 1918. He still managed to see action, even though his injury required him to walk with a cane, in the Normandy invasion in World War II 26 years later. And Quentin Roosevelt, flying one of those rickety World War I planes, was shot down and killed.

By contrast, David Stout of *The New York Times* reported in August of this year:

"A White House aide who requested anonymity... said that he knew of no top Bush administration official who had a relative who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Change of Hart

Jeffrey Hart is a senior editor at the *National Review*, long a conservative bible. But whatever enthusiasm he had for George Bush appears to be fading fast. He recently wrote:

"The common denominator of a successful president, liberal or conservative, has been that they were realists. Because Bush is an ideologue, removed from fact, he has failed comprehensively and surely is the worst president in American history—indeed in the damage he has caused the nation, without a rival in the race for the bottom. Because Bush is generally called a conservative, he will have poisoned the term for decades to come."

I agree with Hart—be sure to see his article on p.40—about the worst president, and pray that he is right about the fate of "conservative." It's time those guys paid the price for turning liberal into a dirty word.

> "The chickens are being bribed by the foxes into providing the key to their coop."

Forgotten casualties

Most people know that the number of Americans killed in Iraq has passed 2,600. But, as I have often complained, we hear the wounded figure much less frequently. In fact, it may already have hit 20,000. The last figure I have from late August was 19,511—and many of their wounds are horrendous. Because of improved roadside bombs, the number of wounded each month almost doubled over the first seven months of this year, reports *The New York Times*.. Furthermore, *The Washington Post* gives a minimum estimate of 40,430 Iraqi fatalities and a maximum of 44,969. According to the latest figures, that number is now growing at the alarming rate of 3,500 a month.

Bush really is the worst president.

Another of Karl's omissions

Another of TR's lessons that seems to have escaped Rove is that as early as 1916, TR was urging President Wilson to raise taxes to pay for the war that was coming.

Interestingly enough, another hero of Rove's is Wendell Willkie. For a graduate class at the University of Texas, Rove wrote one of the best accounts I've seen of Willkie's amazing rush from nowhere to win the 1940 Republican nomination. Needless to say, however, it did not mention the fact that in 1943, Willkie urged Franklin Roosevelt to raise taxes even more than FDR was raising them to pay for World War II. This was when FDR was well on the way to a top rate of 90 percent, and was urging that all incomes be limited to $25,000 a year.

Smooth operators

Hospital executives were recently treated to a free trip to a luxury resort in Colorado featuring free golf and "harmonic" hot stone massages. They were also paid several thousand dollars each for advice.

Who were the generous hosts? Companies like Eli Lilly, Johnson & Johnson, and GE Healthcare. And what was the advice the executives were to give these companies? It concerned, accord-

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ing to Walt Bogdanich of *The New York Times*, how the companies could most effectively go about selling their products to the hospitals run by the executives. In other words, the chickens were being bribed by the foxes into providing the key to their coop.

Home alone

NPR's Margot Adler has discovered a new reason for the "Bowling Alone" phenomenon. It is the McMansions that have been going up all over the country in the last decade. One man explained to her that with everything he needed in the house, "there's no reason to go out."

Give Junior a break

When today's grandparents, a group that includes Beth and Charlie Peters, get together, one of the most common laments involves the over-scheduling of grandchildren. Today's parents seem to think they have to provide an hour by hour program of activities for little Jason and Jennifer. Mom and Dad arrange everything from soccer practices to viola lessons to fill the kids' day.

What concerns the grandparents is the lack of room left for the child to develop imagination and initiative. From my earliest conscious memory, which goes back to my fourth year, vast amounts of the day—excluding only public school and Sunday school—were left for me to play with toys and later read on my own, or to "go out and play." Indeed, those words constituted almost the only what-to-do instruction given by my parents.

I was fortunate to spend my childhood in neighborhoods, whether urban or rural, where there were plenty of kids nearby. Still, it was up to me to initiate social contact and make friends. The only exceptions were occasional play and birthday parties my parents arranged with the children of their friends. Otherwise, it was always up to me to think of what to do when I played alone, or to join with other kids to think of what we would do together. I can't help believing that was good for me, and that the loss for today's children is not good.

The Democrats' dilemma

Ordinarily, I'm on the side of those who believe that concerns for national security must be balanced and often outweighed by concerns for civil liberties. Nonetheless, in my heart I know the Democrats could lose this election—and almost certainly will lose the next presidential race—unless they make absolutely clear that in the rare cases when this country is in real and imminent danger of attack, Democratic leaders will favor doing whatever has to be done to protect the American people. The problem is not only that the Democrats have failed to communicate this idea. It's that too many of them don't seem to comprehend that such a stand is necessary.

Bad medicine

You have heard a good deal from this column about the severe shortage of relevant skills among the District of Columbia's emergency medical technicians. Errors by the EMTs have been so glaring that an Inspector General's report said a recertification program for the technicians was "critical for public safety."

So a recertification program was launched, consisting of 40 hours of training, followed by written and practical skills exams. But suddenly in July the recertification program was cancelled. Why?

I was intrigued by one explanation buried at the end of the long story by Matthew Cella of *The Washington Times*: "the federal government gave less than the anticipated reimbursement for service provided for federal events."

What events? I asked. Then I recalled that the White House routinely deploys D.C. police to escort motorcades every time the president leaves the White House by car. On looking further into the matter, I discovered that a D.C. fire truck and ambulance attend every departure and arrival of the presidential helicopter on the White House lawn. I asked Lucy Kennedy, a *Monthly* intern, to look into whether the fire department was reimbursed for its services. The answer came back: No.

Thus the White House has been at least partially responsible for the cancellation of the recertification program. This reminds me of the failure of our Middle East policy, which has constantly heightened the danger for America, just as now the failure to reimburse the fire department increases the risk to the president. If his helicopter crashes, what if he is treated by the clowns who totally fouled up in the case of David Rosenbaum?

Reality bites

His friends tell us that Josh Bolten, since becoming Bush's chief of staff, has made a valiant effort to forge a connection between the White House and reality. And he does appear to have made at least some progress. He took a step in the right direction with the appointment of Tony Snow as press secretary. Snow is not only likeable, but usually manages to avoid the more blatant forms of obfuscation and flim-flam that we have come to associate with the Bush administration.

Alas, however, Bolten has had less success in hooking his boss up with the real world. Two statements Bush made after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon are illustrative. At a Pentagon meeting, he expressed shock that thousands of Iraqis had attended a pro-Hezbollah, anti-American demonstration in Baghdad. At another gathering, he said that the war had been a defeat for Hezbollah. Incredible.

Bad Democrats

Speaking of the Middle East, it sometimes seems like the Democrats are almost as bad as Bush. This summer, when the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, dared to distance himself from his American sponsors by criticizing Israel's excessive response to Hezbollah's provocation, Democratic congressional leaders demanded that Maliki retract his criticism—even though it was painfully obvious to almost everyone else that Maliki had to speak up if he was to have any credibility with the people of Iraq.

Not again

I am proud of the fact that the *Monthly* anticipated the savings and loans crash of 1989, which cost the taxpayers more than $150 billion to bail out. It did so with an article by Kenneth Weiss ("Banking on Unreal Estate,"

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February 1986) that identified one factor that proved significant in causing the crash: inflated appraisals. When a buyer makes a bid on a new house and goes to a financial institution to get a loan, an appraisal is required as a condition to the loan. If the appraisal is lower than the price bid, the deal, in the words of *The Wall Street Journal*, "is likely to fall through."

Mortgage brokers and loan officers often want the loan to go through, either because of the commission they earn, or because of their "loans made" statistics. To understand the cynicism that operates here, the institution that originates the loan usually sells the loan to another organization, so the originator doesn't have to pay the price for its sins. Brokers and loan officers also tend to choose appraisers who are known for the generosity of their valuation. Indeed, gaining such a reputation tends to enhance the appraiser's prospects.

In a housing boom, all this is not a problem, but when the market cools off, the inflated appraisal means the buyer may not be able to sell the house for enough to repay the mortgage. This means trouble for the buyer and for the institution that owns the loan. And the *Journal's* James Haggerty and Ruth Simon warn that this could be happening soon.

They will fight on the beaches

Sen. Tom Coburn is suspicious about the amount of money the government spends on conferences. Last year he found that the Pentagon alone sent 30,000 military and civil service employees to 6,600 conferences at an average cost of $2,200 per person, reports Stephen Barr at *The Washington Post.* That the Senator's suspicions are not groundless is suggested by his discovery that 98 of the conferences were held in Hawaii, 224 in Las Vegas and 663 in Florida in the middle of winter.

Say it ain't Joe

Just after losing the Connecticut primary to Ned Lamont, on the day when the terrorist plot to bring down civilian airliners bound from London to the U.S. was revealed, Joe Lieberman said, in a quote that deserves to live in infamy, that for this country to follow Lamont's Iraq policy would be "taken as a tremendous victory by the same people who wanted to blow up those planes in this plot hatched in England."

Of course it would. But that doesn't cleanse the slime from Lieberman's statement. By following policies ardently advocated by Lieberman, we have so inflamed Islamic opinion that almost all of the Muslim world is now against us. Sure, they're going to cheer when we leave. But that in no way changes the fact that we were wrong to invade Iraq and would be right to go.

> "It's time those guys paid the price for turning "liberal" into a dirty word."

On thin ice

If you hadn't taken global warming seriously, you might begin to suspect we have a problem when you hear a finding by Professor Lonnie Thompson of Ohio State University, reported by *The Washington Post's* Doug Struck: In Peru, Quelccaya's ice cap shrunk only four yards between 1963 and 1978. Between 2000 and 2002, it retreated at a rate of 360 yards a year.

Polarized at the *Post*

Two days after Lieberman announced he would run for the Senate as an independent, *The Washington Post* endorsed his candidacy. You have to wonder why they pulled the trigger so fast. Maybe it's because they still can't admit they were wrong to support the war in Iraq. At least in the case of Iraq, the *Post* now seems as polarized as *The Wall Street Journal* has been for years: The news columns tell truths that the editorial page ignores.

The greatest deal

I just received a copy of *Over Here: How the G.I. Bill Transformed the American Dream*, by Edward Humes. Not having read it, I can only say the subtitle sounds like the author is on the right track. I believe that the G.I. Bill, which gave college educations to eight million veterans of World War II, was one of the greatest social advances in American history. People like one of my Columbia roommates, Bob Williams, who had been an electrical worker and had never even thought of higher education as a possibility, were able to get college degrees. Bob, having endured the freezing cold and terror of the Battle of the Bulge, richly deserved the reward his country gave him. But it was the country that profited immensely from the education Bob and all those other veterans received. Not only did it move them and their families, which in that era meant 30 million people, solidly into the middle class, it trained them for the jobs that powered the lasting postwar prosperity.

When historians tell us that the New Deal ended in the late 1930s, or at the very latest, at the onset of World War II, I want to say, "Wait a minute, what about the G.I. Bill?" It was passed in 1944, the last full year of the war and of FDR's life.

Playing to the base

There has been a lot of really fine reporting from Iraq. Some of the best has been by Aparisim Ghosh. If you can lay your hands on the August 14th issue of *Time*, read his "Baghdad Diary." It fortified my conclusion that whether we leave

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or stay, Iraq's foreseeable future is grim. One of the many seemingly insuperable obstacles to ending the violence described by Ghosh, and one that I had heard little about before, is the absence of an Iraqi leader who could unite the country.

"Politicians," writes Ghosh, "have discovered that the easiest way to win votes is to appeal to sectarian chauvinists." The country desperately needs a Nelson Mandela but "in three and a half years of covering Iraq, I've not come across a single leader who has seemed able to rise above petty political or sectarian interests.

"Never mind a Mandela. There is not even an Iraqi Hamid Karzai. The beleaguered Afghan president has more credibility with his people than any Iraq politician could honestly claim."

Worth a read

By the way, I'm troubled by the fact that *Time* and *Newsweek* are ignored by a lot of smart people, especially the young. Both magazines have been criticized in these pages, most recently for their increasing tendency to favor cover stories that seem better suited to *People* and *Parade*. Still, they both have a goodly number of first-rate reporters like *Time's* Mike Allen, and gifted writers like *Newsweek's* Evan Thomas, and are worth a look each week.

That's insane

The Department of Agriculture is cutting its testing for mad cow disease by 90 percent, reports the Associated Press. The test, instituted in 2003 when the disease was first discovered in an American cow, is being cut back even though two more cases of the disease have turned up in the U.S. and another quite recently in Canada. Consumers Union thinks every cow slaughtered should be tested. But even before the cutback, the Department of Agriculture was testing only one percent of the cows slaughtered. Now it will be one tenth of one percent. Cattle owners are delighted. Are you?

If at first you don't succeed ...

Another example of the Bush administration's zealous regard for the haves has been the effort to abolish the estate tax. This summer, Senate Democrats were able to fight off the most recent attempt to cut the tax. But the administration has found another way to achieve its objective. They are crippling enforcement. According to David Cay Johnston of *The New York Times*, the IRS is cutting the jobs of 157 of the agency's 345 estate-tax lawyers.

Tax fairness?

Speaking of tax policy that favors the haves, *The Charleston Gazette* recently reported that "the poorest 25 percent of West Virginians pay a higher proportion of their income in taxes than the richest 25 percent."

Poison Ivy

One reason today's parents overschedule their kids is another cultural phenomenon much lamented by grandparents: parental pressure on Junior to get into Harvard. His activities must be planned to not only achieve high SATs, but the kind of extracurricular resume thought to impress admissions directors.

The problem is that this lament, though often repeated in this column and elsewhere—indeed, most recently in *Time* and *Newsweek*—seems to have no effect on today's parents. Their Ivy League obsession just becomes nuttier.

A stunning example comes from a clinical psychologist, Madeline Levine, in an interview with *The Washington Post's* Sandra Boodman: "I just had parents [who] came into my office with their crying daughter and said, 'We just wasted $160,000.' Why did they think that? Because they sent their kid to private school, and now she wants to go to the University of Colorado."

Getting to the polls on time

Eighty-one percent of Republicans are "almost certain" to vote in November, and 14 percent say they are very likely to do so, according to Paul Bedard of *U.S. News & World Report*. What this means to me is, however good the opinion polls may look to the Democrats, they better make sure they get their voters to the real polls.

The slot machine

When this magazine began publishing in 1969, the most neglected field of study by anthropologists was the culture of modern organizations. The *Monthly*, to remedy this problem, inaugurated a feature called "The Culture of Bureaucracy," but it had little impact on other journalists for the next decade. By the early 1980s however, Japan's economic success, compared to ours, had ignited interest in the culture of business organizations, and that interest has continued. Today *The Wall Street Journal* has a column by Jared Sandberg called "Cubicle Culture." I'm a fan.

Not long ago, Sandberg wrote, "How do you say no to a yes man?" His answer:

"The problem is you can't say no to a yes man. Having rarely uttered it, they don't value the currency of a 'no'....' No matter how deftly delivered, a 'no' to a yes-man is transformed into one of corporate America's most career-limiting charges: 'You're not a team player.'"

This is true in government as well as in business. Indeed, there are often carry-over truths about cultures that can help denizens of one understand another. For instance, I often tell reporters for larger papers like *The Washington Post* that their own experience can help them understand what happens or doesn't happen in government. An example is the slot syndrome.

For years at the *Post*, an applicant to work in one section wouldn't be hired if they had no slots for that section, even though jobs were available in several other sections of the paper. Sometimes, of course, real expertise was relevant, so that knowing something about baseball was handy in covering baseball. But more often the same talents were needed in several different sections, but the applicant would be turned away if they didn't have the right slot. This happens all the time in government.

Jobs are usually established to fill real needs. Yet even when the real need disappears, the slots often remain. Supervisors cling to their slots even when no longer justified, because the number of employees under each supervisor often determines not only his bureaucratic unit's budget, but his own rank, salary and clout. ♦

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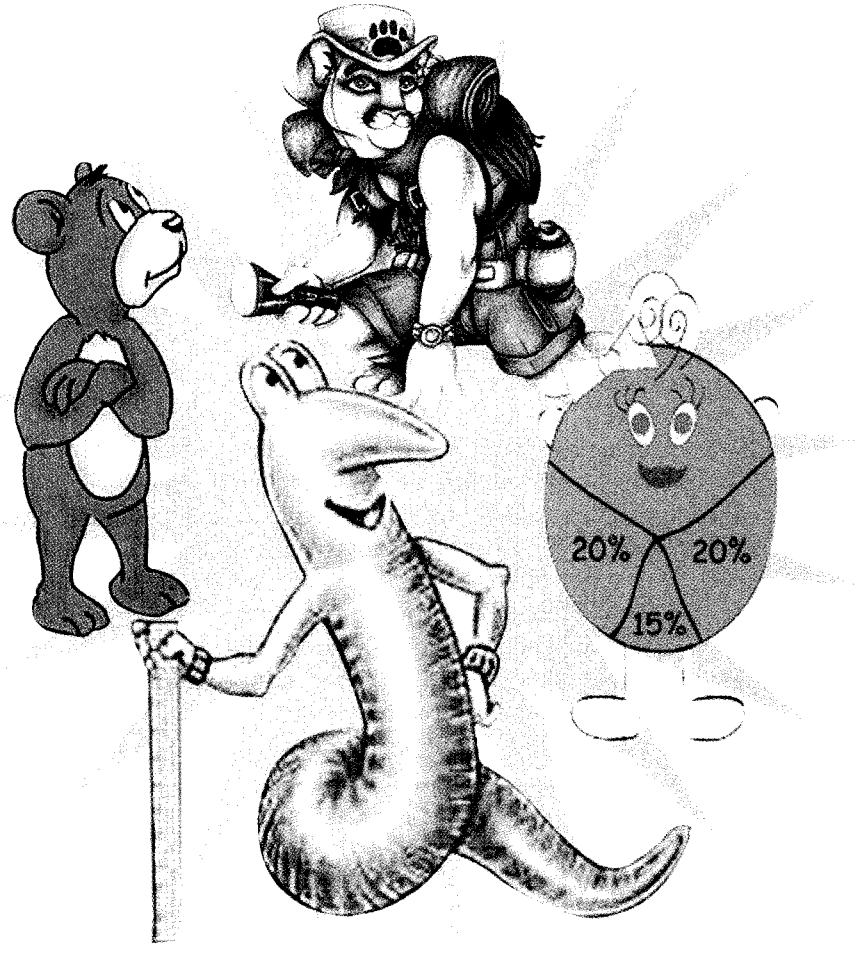
"...such district (not exceeding ten miles square)...[shall] become the seat of the government of the United States." – THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

Intelligent Designs

Uncle Sam reaches out to kids on the web.

By Conor Clarke



Clockwise from top: Rex the Homeland Security mountain lion, Pie-Chart Pam of the National Agriculture Statistics Service, S.K. Worm of the National Research Conservation Service, and Ginger the CIA bear.

In late March, the Federal Reserve took an educational gamble: it created a website for kids. But perhaps more significant than the site itself—which offers a brief tour of economic policy guided by a cartoon bald eagle—was the fact that a major paper wound up noticing it. In an adventurous foray into the world of government kids' pages, *The Washington Post* praised the central bank's "colorful" creation.

Unfortunately, by finding news in a single, sagging tree, the *Post* managed to miss a flourishing forest. For years, the government has run thousands of kids' pages—almost every agency has one—most of which are far better than the Fed's. (And, really, the Fed site is pretty lame: there are no games or prizes, and the eagle is crudely animated). These sites can be traced back to a 1997 memorandum in which Bill Clinton directed agency heads to "enrich the Internet as a tool for teaching and learning" and suggested kids' pages as a possible improvement. The memo was, as one agency web-honcho puts it, "a call to action."

But ordering up a website is easy. Making one that'll have kids hooked is hard. Sure, NASA's website draws a crowd, but that's a special case: space is inherently cool. Very little else in government is. What government can offer tends to be at best boring (press releases on animal ID systems, Treasury forecasts) and at worst terrifying (crime, natural disasters, war). How, then, do you dress all this up in a kid-friendly costume? To find out, we talked to dozens of government web-designers—"tunnel people," as one insider calls them—and spent enough hours surfing children's pages to earn an honorary place on the national sex-offenders registry.

The main thing we learned is that any self-respecting site for kids must feature a cartoon mascot, preferably one from the animal kingdom. The CIA's page, for instance, employs a

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blue bear named Ginger, a mascot-cum-tour guide at Langley. ("Hi! My name is Ginger. That's short for Virginia, where my home is...I love walnuts, but I never thought you could hide a secret message in the empty shell." And so forth). But man-made objects can also fit the bill. Take the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) website, which created Stanley Stat, an animated graph who, along with his ambiguous love interest, Pie-Chart Pam, exhorts kids to learn more about, well, agricultural statistics. ("Do you know your Agricultural Statistics History?" inquires Stanley, staying admirably on-message). Indeed, the entire Department of Agriculture, which runs NASS, has a penchant for bringing the inanimate to life. "My favorite is Thermy," says USDA Web Director Kim Taylor, referring to Thermy the Thermometer, a mercurial fellow who comes complete with a polka dot pot-holder, puffy chef's hat, and digital temperature display in lieu of a mouth. "There are creative people, you know?"

Take the National Agricultural Statistics Service website, which created Stanley Stat, an animated graph who, along with his ambiguous love interest, Pie-Chart Pam, exhorts kids to learn more about, well, agricultural statistics.

Nevertheless, animation, while popular, should never be used lightly. As Department of Homeland Security spokeswoman Joanna Gonzalez explains, cartoon mascots set the tone for an entire kids' page. In the case of the DHS, that mascot would be Rex the mountain lion, a Freddie Mercury-like fellow in a sleeveless shirt who has the head of a feline and the body of a human weightlifter. It's up to Rex to be a role model to children who are planning for emergencies such as an act of terrorism ("Talk to your parents or teachers if you have questions about this type of emergency") and to interest them in preparedness exercises ("This fun game will help you remember what your family should pack in your emergency supply kit!"). And creating Rex took a lot of thought. "It had to be someone that was strong, and we wanted it to be family friendly," says Gonzalez. "We always describe Rex as being a strong family man who protects his wife, Purrcilla, and his daughter, Rory." Rex, in other words, is an animal version of Michael Chertoff, only competent.

By the same logic, names require close attention. They should fit the agency in question, and puns are a must. The Forest Service enjoys backing from one Woodsy Owl (a "whimsical fellow," claims the site bio), and the National Research Conservation Service's site offers S.K.Worm, the agency's "official annelid." (The "S.K." stands for "scientific knowledge," but the name is pronounced "Squirm"). But not all puns are created equal: they must undergo extensive audience testing. A 25-page USDA slogan study reveals that Thermy the Thermometer came by his moniker only after focus groups rejected "Tempy," "Chef Thurmond," "Hot Shot," "Thermo," and "Temperman."

As for exposing kids to the world's realities, not every site shies away from calling it like it is. At first blush, the Department of Justice kids' page, with its smiling Lady Justice and befuddled cartoon judge, looks like any other run-of-the-mill, feel-good site. But click on the "10 most wanted" link and you're zapped through to characters like Robert William Fisher, wanted for "allegedly killing his wife and two young children and then blowing up the house in which they all lived," and Diego Leon Montoya, who is being "sought in connection with the manufacture and distribution of multiple tons of cocaine" and who has a reputation for "taking help from right-wing paramilitaries as well as leftist rebels." Harsh details, but kids can't believe in Santa forever.

Of course, morale may be a problem for webmasters who work within relatively obscure agencies. In truth, we wouldn't have thought the United States Patent and Trademark Office needed a kids' page, either. Or the Census Bureau. Or, for that matter, the Mine Safety and Health Administration. But try telling that to the nine year-old who happens to be obsessed with just these things. After all, where else would boys and girls go to learn about toy patents, or the finer points of mineral extraction compliance? Answer: Nowhere. They would go nowhere.

And even if your site is small, you still have a chance to push democratic values to the fore. White House Internet Director David Almacy maintains a website called Barney.gov, which

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features almost nothing but pictures and clips of the president's Scottish terrier, Barney, running around the White House (with the occasional cameo from a senior administration official). But where some see only a fluffy quadruped, Almacy sees much more. "[Barney.gov] says, you know, this is the people's house," he explains. "The president says that often. This is not my house. This is the people's house. So we thought, what better way to show that than to have a fun animal run around the house?" Fair enough. Of course, a better way for the president to say "This is not my house" might be simply to leave the house—forever. But that's just a thought.

To be sure, all of this costs a fair amount of money. While it's impossible to arrive at a total, there's no doubt that the federal government as a whole spends tens of millions of dollars each year on such websites. (NASA, which admittedly runs a fancier kids' site than most, estimates that it spends $150,000 dollars a year developing children's web content.) As for whether it's well spent, cynics could observe that Kids.gov, the government's big children's web portal, is currently the 312,144th most popular site on the Internet, just behind perennial favorites like virtualkiss.com and Jesus Dress Up. They might also ask whether being simple and direct (while keeping references to leftist rebels to a minimum) isn't preferable to having every harsh reality of the world filtered through a furry animal.

Then again, it's also important to remember what we get in return for our tax dollars. Brilliance like Barney.gov doesn't come free. As Almacy recounts in harrowing detail, making his first movie with the dogs—Barney and his canine cohort, Ms. Beazley—took a level of time and effort only possible with robust financial backing. "I literally had a chat with them in the Rose Garden," he recalls. "So I leaned over with my hands on my knees and said, 'Okay, guys, you're going to be participating in a movie, and we appreciate all your help.'" Grasping the depth of the moviemaking commitment, the dogs cooperated.

Conor Clarke is an intern at *The Washington Monthly*.

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The Washington Post
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Anthony Shadid, ten-year Middle East veteran reporter, has brought American readers to war zones before. But his stories for *The Washington Post* during the Israel-Hezbollah conflict set a new standard for war reporting. Shadid crafted vivid daily dispatches of a country in crisis, offering rare views into Lebanon's hospitals and homes, back roads and refugees. Fluent in Arabic, Shadid balances official explanations of controversial events with eyewitness accounts and on-scene detail.

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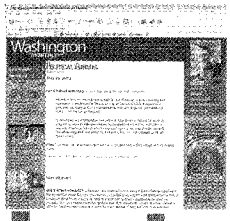
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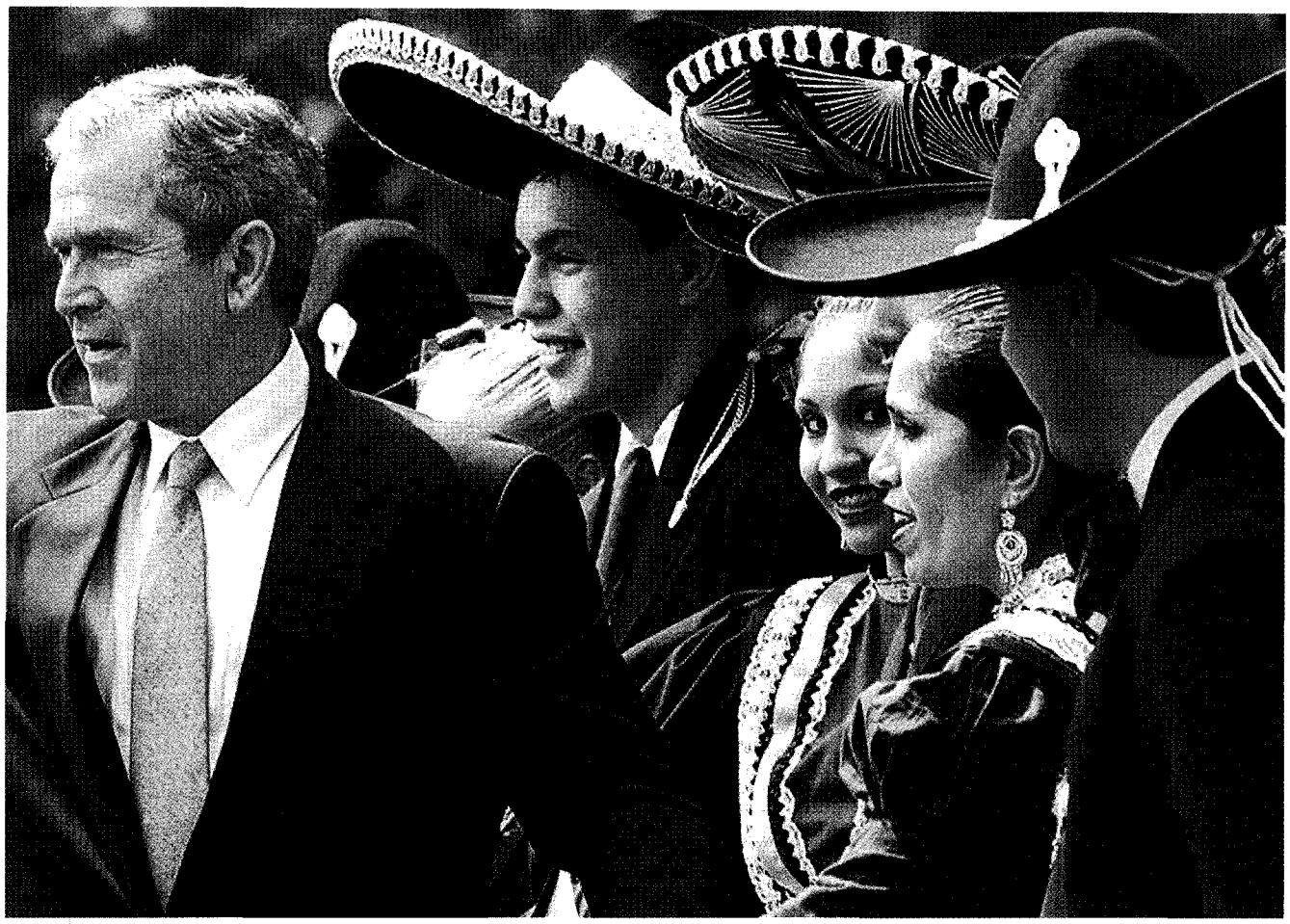

GETTY IMAGES, PHOTOGRAPHER STEPHEN JAFFE

Borderline Catastrophe

How the fight over immigration blew up Rove's big tent.

By Rachel Morris

Karl Rove's storied partnership with George W. Bush, now in its second decade, has long been concerned with more momentous matters than simply winning elections. Famously, Rove has sought to engineer a seismic realignment in American politics. To that end, he's perfected two signature strategies. He's mastered a "base-in" approach, designing policy positions first for the party's core conservatives, then marketing them to moderates (in contrast to the "center-out" model preferred by Bill Clinton). At the same time, Rove has made ingenious appeals to new constituencies that he believed were already Republicans, but just didn't know it. Because these tactics defy all kinds of conventional wisdom and have delivered Bush a string of victories, they've won Rove a reputation for political genius. Stories about him invariably make dazzled references to his latest scheme to bring some unlikely group into the GOP fold: black conservatives, Arabs in Michigan, outlier Jews.

Rachel Morris is an editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

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But for Republicans eyeing a long-term majority, the Hispanic vote is considered the real prize, particularly immigrant Hispanics. While two thirds of registered U.S.-born Hispanics reliably vote Democratic, foreign-born Hispanics remain up for grabs. This group now comprises nearly half the Latino electorate, which has tripled between 1980 and 2004 to 10 million voters; that figure is expected to double by 2020. For Republicans, this growth is especially important, because their core constituency—white voters—is in demographic decline. But what makes Hispanic voters so coveted by both parties is also their location on a stratified electoral map. As the last two presidential contests have demonstrated, the Democrats have a lock on the Northeast and California, while Republicans hold the South; the two parties split the Midwest. The real battleground is the West and Southwest, traditionally GOP regions that have been drifting leftward, partly because of their growing concentrations of Hispanic residents. If one party wins their loyalty, the theory goes, it holds the key to a generation of political dominance.

Rove and Bush understood the importance of Hispanic voters and have courted them earnestly. That's not an easy task. Puerto Ricans don't vote like Cubans; Mexican Americans in Texas are very different from Mexican Americans in California. But one issue has the potential to attract significant Latino support or provoke their opposition: immigration. After Bush won the White House in 2000, he repeatedly promised to enact a guest-worker program and some form of legalization for the undocumented. In a rare occurrence for this administration, the imperatives of Republican politics actually aligned with something resembling sound public policy. It's not so far-fetched to say that the GOP's future rested with Bush and Rove's ability to make that policy happen.

Nor is it too overwrought to say that Rove's grand designs have disintegrated. For most of this year, the Republican Party has been publicly waging an ugly internal fight over immigration. Like the president—and, polls show, most Americans—a bipartisan coalition in the Senate supports comprehensive reform. But House Republicans, fearful of their inflamed base, won't budge from an enforcement-only measure that in March and April propelled thousands of Hispanics into the streets. This April, former Republican National Committee chairman Ed Gillespie penned a dire warning to his party in *The Wall Street Journal*: "Anti-immigration rhetoric is a political siren song, and Republicans must resist its lure," he wrote, "or our majority will crash on the shoals." But instead of working with the Senate to actually pass legislation, this summer, Republican representatives have been traveling to competitive districts to hold hearings with titles like, "Should We Embrace the Senate's Grant of Amnesty to Millions of Illegal Aliens and Repeat the Mistakes of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986?" Even if Congress scrapes together a face-saving compromise before November, the damage to the GOP's standing with Latinos can't be so quickly repaired—already, a recent poll by NDN showed that Bush's support among Spanish-speaking Hispanics has dropped almost by half.

It's become a journalistic truism that the House's theatrics will hurt the Republicans in the long-term, but will at least provide the boost they need to hold Congress in November. A closer look suggests that even that latter assumption is doubtful (see "Base Instinct," p.17). Historians may look back at the GOP's struggle over comprehensive reform and pronounce it the moment when its chances for an enduring majority slipped from its grasp. It's worth asking how the Republicans got into this mess —and what it says about the sustainability of the Karl Rove brand of politics.

Hot patata

The American public agrees on very few things, but the need to do *something* about immigration forms a rare island of consensus. What that something might be provokes a more fractured response. Although a strain of anti-immigrant sentiment runs throughout the population, in recent times at least, its most uncompromising advocates tend to belong to the Republican Party. Time and time again, the GOP has been seduced by the antics of its nativist wing, with disastrous results.

This happened most notoriously in the mid-1990s, when then-governor of California, Pete Wilson, facing an uphill reelection battle, embraced Proposition 187, a state ballot initiative denying social services to legal and illegal immigrants. Both Wilson and Proposition 187 won, prompting House Republicans to attempt a similar stunt. They clamored for a harsh immigration bill and welfare reforms denying benefits to legal immigrants. Bill Clinton vetoed welfare legislation twice because of these demands. Eventually, he signed both bills, but later restored most of the benefits, portraying his party as the champion of immigrants. In 1996, Clinton returned to the White House with 72 percent of the Hispanic vote, collecting Arizona and Florida along the way. In California, Wilson's crusade prompted Hispanics to register to vote in record numbers. With the maverick exception of Arnold Schwarzenegger, the state has been solidly blue ever since.

There were few more attentive students of these lessons than Karl Rove and George W. Bush. As governor of Texas, Bush denounced Wilson and Proposition 187 and spoke warmly of the contributions that Hispanics had made to Texas. He was rewarded with nearly half the Hispanic vote in his second gubernatorial campaign. Seeking to replicate this success in 2000, Bush became fond of remarking to reporters that "family values don't stop at the Rio Grande." His overtures paid off. Whereas Bob Dole won just 21 percent of the Hispanic vote in 1996, Bush, according to exit polls, captured 35 percent.

Everything in moderation

In order to get elected, aspiring presidents often say things that anger their base. Bush did that in two main ways. His education policy, with its prescription for a stronger federal role in local schools, angered believers in small government. And his immigration proposals, with their emphasis on guest-worker provisions rather than border security, were anathema to the party's nativists. More than anything else, these two platforms signaled to voters that Bush would be a moderate.

At first, it looked like Bush planned to be. He tapped Hispanics for cabinet posts and made his first foreign visit to Mexico to meet with Vicente Fox. Initially, he even considered an amnesty (back then, people still used the word) for around three million Mexican workers. But after conservatives com-

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complained—Sen. Phil Gramm declared that an amnesty would proceed over his "cold, dead political body"—Bush wavered. "When he got some rollback from the real conservative base, he backed off," said Dick Armey, the former House majority leader, who had urged Bush to stand his ground. "He didn't allow himself to be the largest voice in the country on the subject."

When Fox visited the U.S. in the first week of September 2001, he and Bush discussed a guest-worker program, increased visa quotas for Mexicans, a mechanism allowing some undocumented workers to "normalize," and heightened border security. But instead of reaching a bilateral agreement, as was once anticipated, the "two *amigos*" merely mapped the outlines of sweeping reform.

> Even if Congress scrapes together a face-saving compromise before November, the damage to the GOP's standing with Latinos can't be so quickly repaired.

Then came September 11. As the nation rallied around Bush, his hand was strengthened immeasurably. In retrospect, this was probably Bush's best chance to push for comprehensive reform, at a time when the conservative base would have been least able to resist. "Had he done [immigration] in 2002, he would have had more credibility," said Kate O'Beirne, the Washington editor of *National Review*. "He could have sold both guest worker and citizenship as security issues." But instead of challenging his base, Bush fed it with tax cuts. For the next two years, immigration virtually vanished from the president's public agenda, resurfacing only as his reelection campaign took shape at the end of 2003.

In January 2004, Bush again called for a guest worker program in his State of the Union speech. When a president includes a message like this in a major election-year address, it usually means one of two things: He is telling lawmakers that he wants action, or he is merely signaling to a constituent group that he has their interests at heart. In this case, Bush appears to have been doing the latter—immigration never became a major feature of his campaign. However, at least a few lawmakers seemed to have taken him seriously. In July, Sen. Larry Craig (R-Idaho) offered an initiative called AgJobs, which would have created a path to legal residency for half a million farm workers. Although 63 senators (including 27 Republicans) backed AgJobs, the White House, reportedly nervous about touching anything resembling an amnesty that year, asked Majority Leader Bill Frist to prevent the measure from coming to a vote. Meanwhile, Sen. John McCain, (R-Ariz), along with two Arizona Republicans in the House, Reps. Jim Kolbe and Jeff Flake, began working on a comprehensive bill. Towards the end of the term, a small group of House Republicans attempted to persuade the White House to translate Bush's stirring talk on immigration into concrete proposals, according to a former chief of staff to a GOP representative. But the White House responded evasively, refusing even to tell the group what types of measures it might potentially support, the staffer said, adding: "I don't believe they showed leadership at that time."

As election day approached, Rove mounted an extraordinary effort to rouse the base to maximum strength. This required a very different style from the soft-focus conservatism of 2000. Because conservative backing underpinned Bush's entire reelection strategy, this time he could afford few diversions from the party line. His prescription-drug benefit, an affront to the small government wing, used up his minimal allowance for crossing his base.

At the same time, Rove aimed to supplement conservative support, not by concentrating on swing voters as he had done in 2000, but by making targeted appeals to what he considered persuadable constituencies. To that end, Bush continued to say all the right things to Hispanics. While the Democrats' Hispanic outreach focused on promoting specific policies, Rove produced sophisticated, issue-light TV ads that projected messages of inclusion and respect, delivered by Bush in Spanish. The seeming brilliance of this approach was that Bush could reach out to Latinos without really promising them anything—and without arousing much ire from restrictionists. Rove's plan appeared to work beautifully. Strong conservative turnout swept Bush back into office, along with a share of the Hispanic vote that increased to 40 percent—almost matching John Kerry among foreign-born Latinos.

All talk

In the weeks after Bush's victory, Rove's reputation as "the architect" was confirmed. It seemed that Republicans might really be about to embark on a period of extended dominance. Again Bush indicated that immigration would become a cornerstone of his term. The conditions seemed promising: At this point, he might have used his political capital to override objections from his nativist base and push for moderate immigration reform, boosting his share of the Hispanic vote in the process. Or he could heed the obsession of the party's small-government ideologues, who were urging him to privatize social security in order to destroy a traditional pillar of Democratic support. Both were, as Bush liked to say, political gamechangers, but only immigration required him to cross his base. Instead, he chose Social Security. This turned out to be a fateful decision: The plan proved irrevocably unpopular. Meanwhile, the consequences of the administration's decisions of the past four years

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GETTY IMAGES, PHOTOGRAPHER PAUL J. RICHARDS

Early in his first term, Bush reportedly even considered a limited amnesty for Mexican workers.

began to set in. Iraq deteriorated, spending spiraled, corruption scandals unraveled. The administration's distrust of government resulted in a disastrously inept response to Hurricane Katrina. By the summer of 2005, Bush's poll ratings had plummeted, and events had spun beyond his control.

Until then, Rove's strategy of wooing Latinos without actually doing anything that might offend the conservative base had worked remarkably well—perhaps because his outreach to the base and to Hispanics had advanced along separate tracks. So far, he hadn't been confronted with anything that might cause these tracks to converge, forcing the disparate elements of the Republican voting coalition towards collision.

The convergence began on right-wing talk radio. By mid-2005, the medium was at somewhat of a loss. Normally its red meat consists, to put it baldly, of liberal-bashing and bellicose defenses of conservatives. But now the liberals had lost the election, and the causes conservatives had embraced—the war, the insistence on small, frugal government—weren't going so well. Casting around for something to talk about, hosts discovered the Minutemen. Illegal immigration has always been a perennial source of talk-radio outrage, but the Minutemen, with their warnings that terrorists could enter the country via Mexico, set off a veritable storm. Suddenly, the self-styled border patrols, along with their champion in the House, Rep. Tom Tancredo, became fixtures on radio shows and cable TV.

According to a former senior White House official, the administration became concerned by this phenomenon and conducted some research. Staffers listened to hours of talk radio and found that the obsession with illegal immigration on talk radio had appeared virtually from nowhere. "Two years ago, this wasn't on the radar screen," he said. House Republicans, already eyeing the midterm elections, also took note. By then, Tancredo's immigration-reform caucus had grown to more than 80 members (in 2001, it only had 15).

In August, the White House tried to push back. It tapped Gillespie, Armey and former Democratic Representative Cal Dooley to "do a 501(c)3"—as such efforts are known on the Hill —a non-profit lobbying campaign funded by corporate donations. However, although Bush has always strongly supported a guest-worker program, it's rarely noted that over the years his pronouncements on earned legalization or citizenship have become increasingly opaque. (His preferred formulation is now "bringing workers out of the shadows"). When approached for as much as $3 million in funding, business groups found that all the White House was offering in return were generalities—bullet points rather than detailed policy. Business groups withheld their cash, and the effort petered out.

However, the former Hill chief of staff said that it was embattled Majority Leader Tom DeLay "who played a key role—probably more than anyone else" in pushing an enforcement-only agenda to the foreground. According to

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Base Instinct

Conventional wisdom assumes that the House Republicans' insistence on enforcement-only immigration reform will help them in November despite the long-term risks. As Rep. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz) puts it, "There are people in the House who think this issue is our magic carpet ride." However, it's possible that House Republicans may be badly misreading the views of conservative voters.

One indicator is the primary challenges to GOP Rep. Chris Cannon, who represents a conservative Utah district and is one of the House's staunchest backers of comprehensive reform. In 2004, Cannon was opposed by a restrictionist who reportedly received more than $100,000 in assistance from anti-immigration groups and Team America PAC, founded by Rep. Tancredo. Cannon won by 16 percentage points. This year, Cannon was challenged by wealthy businessman John Jacob, and again immigration dominated the race; Team America PAC ran $50,000 worth of ads attacking Cannon, according to news reports. Although Jacob made plenty of noise, Cannon won comfortably, 56-44.

Voter views on immigration are especially complex—and often just plain contradictory. What House Republicans may have overlooked is that although pretty much everyone wants tougher border security, that doesn't mean that they're not also open to other reforms. This July, the conservative Manhattan Institute released a poll of likely Republican voters in which 75 percent of respondents favored legislation encompassing border security, harsher employer penalties, and a temporary worker program with a path to citizenship for the undocumented. This attitude held among "very conservative Republicans (72 percent), white conservative Christians (76 percent), and those who listen to news talk radio on a daily basis (72 percent)." When given a choice between this plan and an enforcement-only bill, Republicans still preferred the comprehensive plan by 58 to 33 percent.

Even worse, those representatives who refuse to compromise on enforcement may be setting a bigger trap for themselves. Republican pollster Whit Ayres found in a June survey that conservative voters will be less likely to vote for Republicans this November if Congress can't pass a bill. House Republicans may have turned the immigration debate into the event they most wanted to avoid—a referendum on their ability to govern.

– Rachel Morris

three sources familiar with negotiations over the House bill, in early October, soon after he was indicted, DeLay told the Republican conference that representatives should make a border-security bill their strategy for the midterm elections. This may have startled some members, like Judiciary Committee chairman Rep. James Sensenbrenner and Speaker Dennis Hastert, who were known to be open to broader reform. "We'd always considered the Speaker kind of in our corner," said Rep. Flake. But before he stepped down as majority leader, DeLay insisted that the House pass legislation focused only on enforcement. The resulting bill was rushed through the Judiciary committee with no hearings. The leadership refused to allow a vote on any Republican amendments.

This seemed like the moment when Bush would make a stand. Instead, the former White House official said, the administration did some polling, and found that respondents seriously doubted Bush's commitment to securing the border. In November, the president flew to Tucson, Ariz., and gave a speech touting increased funding for detention, mentioning measures for immigrant workers only in passing. By then, the base didn't buy it. "[The response was] 'why is he talking about it now? It's been five years,'" said O'Beirne. "It sounds tinny, it feels insincere." On Dec. 16, after a two-day debate, Republicans rammed their bill through the House.

With the base unleashed, the White House was unable to broker a compromise, either by persuasion or by pressure. This spring, Karl Rove and Josh Bolten, the White House's newly appointed chief of staff, met with the Republican conference to pitch the president's plan. "People were booing and hissing," said the former House staffer. "That probably wouldn't have happened a year ago." Then in June, Brian Bilbray won the California House seat vacated by disgraced Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham. Bilbray had supported the enforcement-only approach against an opponent who supported comprehensive reform. "All of a sudden," said Flake, "Bilbray becomes our model."

Comprehensive failure

In the future, people may look to Bilbray as the Pete Wilson of 2006, the superficial success story that Republicans imitated to their long-term detriment. Already, prominent GOP leaders are blaming House Republicans, particularly Rep. Tancredo, for leading the party to its ruin. Grover Norquist, the president of Americans for Tax Reform, described Rep. Tancredo as "the face of the Republican party losing elections for the next 20 years." (He added that the GOP might have avoided this problem by "sending Tancredo to Guantanamo"). Armey put it more diplomatically. "A lot of Hispanics around the country are taking this very personally," he said. "They're saying, 'The problem with Republicans is that they just don't like us.' "

But perhaps the real casualty of the GOP's immigration meltdown is the Rovian model of Republican politics. Part of the near-mythic aura of infallibility surrounding Rove stems from the sense that his tactics seem to defy all known political laws—that it shouldn't be possible to reach out to minorities while fanning the flames of a base that is often hostile to them. And as it turns out, it probably isn't. ♦

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The Tyrant Who Came In From the Cold

Gadhafi gave up his WMDs not because we scared him, but because we talked to him.

By Ron Suskind

In the middle of October 2001, Ben Bonk, a CIA lifer, quietly entered a baronial home on Regent's Park in London for a meeting he hoped would be the start of something. The house belonged to Prince Bandar bin Sultan, a nephew of Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Abdullah, and, for 18 years, the kingdom's ambassador to the United States. At 52, Bandar, a close confidant of both Bushes, is a person of profound complexities, a cheery, educated man of enormous appetites. An omniscient observer could have spotted him recently walking the sidelines of an NFL game or dining and smoking cigars in the West Wing. (A sharp eye might spot a driver stopping by Riggs Bank in Washington on a certain day each month to pick up a suitcase with $50,000 in cash that Bandar doles out to friends, relatives, and Saudi operatives in the United States.)

Bandar is also a man who gets things done, and he

Ron Suskind is the author of *The One Percent Doctrine* (Simon & Schuster), from which this article is adapted. Copyright Ron Suskind, 2006.

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builds relationships that rest on his consistent effectiveness. This day, he was brokering an important sit-down at his house. He welcomed Bonk and ushered him into a stately parlor. Waiting there was an elegant, hand-tailored, smiling embodiment of the "dark side."

"Exciting, about those Spartans," said Musa Kousa.

Bonk laughed. "Yeah, we waited a long time. Since Magic."

Both men had been at Michigan State. Bonk had graduated in 1976, the year before Magic Johnson arrived. Kousa, a rabid basketball fan, had worked toward a master's degree in sociology until 1973. Kousa's thesis, handed in a few years later, was a keeper, the kind that professors make a copy of and store in a drawer. It wasn't so much the trenchant analysis, though there was some of that in 209 pages with footnotes. It was the research. Kousa, born in Tripoli, Libya, to a prominent family, had been able to interview his subject: Moammar Gadhafi.

Time past, time present. For both men, it was a very long way from East Lansing, Spartan Stadium, and MSU's green and white.

Bonk had spent nearly two decades traveling the world for the CIA, especially the Arab world. He had married briefly, divorced—like so many agents—and moved up quickly through the agency's ranks. By 2000, he was deputy director of the CIA's Counter-Terrorist Center—a soft-spoken, steady counterpoint to the flamboyant director of the center, Cofer Black. Ever reliable and precise, it was Bonk who, along with Deputy Director John McLaughlin, camped at Bush's ranch in September 2000—two months before the election—to carefully tell the Republican nominee state secrets. (It is standard for presidential nominees to be briefed prior to the election.) Bonk grimly informed Bush that during the coming four years, Americans would certainly die in terrorist acts planned or simply inspired by Osama bin Laden.

Kousa had gone from Lansing to Libya to work for Gadhafi. By 1980, he was head of the Libyan Mission in England—essentially Libya's ambassador to the United Kingdom. In an extraordinary interview with *The Times* of London, Kousa had told a reporter that Libya supported the IRA and that two Libyan opponents of Gadhafi living in London would be killed. He was summarily expelled from the country. Soon thereafter, the two Libyans were found dead in London. Other Libyan dissidents were killed across Europe in the coming year.

In the 1980s, Gadhafi was looking to be a player on the world stage, and terror was his means. By the mid-'80s, Ronald Reagan was calling Gadhafi the most dangerous man in the world. The United States bombed Libya in 1986—an attack that killed Gadhafi's daughter and injured two of his sons—in retaliation for his having bombed a nightclub in Germany. Onerous unilateral sanctions were placed on the country.

Then, in December 1988, the United States suffered one of the worst acts of terrorism it would experience prior to 9/11: the explosion of a Pan Am jet over Lockerbie, Scotland. The attack killed 270 people, mostly Americans—including 35 students from Syracuse University. Among the planners of the attack had been one of Bonk's fellow Spartans: Musa Kousa.

That, at least, was the consensus of every significant intelligence agency in the West. The Lockerbie flight had taken place in an era when Kousa was deputy head of Libyan intelligence. And Kousa was soon implicated by the French and British intelligence in yet another disaster: the blowing up of a French airliner, UTA 772, over Niger in 1989. The death toll was 170.

By the end of the 1980s, Gadhafi had destroyed Libya's relations with much of the world, and the isolation had seemed to be irreversible. But things changed by the end of the following decade. In 1998, George Tenet, just a year into his directorship of the CIA, and John McLaughlin, his deputy director for intelligence, had flown to Jiddah to meet with Bandar. In the ambassador's sprawling home, which McLaughlin compares to "Disney World, with flying monkeys and giant TV screens," Bandar mentioned he'd chatted recently with Gadhafi. "I think he might want to talk," Bandar said. "He's tired of being alone."

Bandar was right. The following year, Musa Kousa had slipped into Geneva, where he'd met with Bonk. What became clear to Bonk was that the Libyans had grown tired of being excluded from the world community. They were unable to send their privileged sons abroad to U.S. colleges, and they were suffocating under sanctions that limited everything from dry goods to key parts for oil refineries, many of which had slipped into disrepair. Bruce Riedel, a director on Clinton's National Security Council, soon became engaged on the policy side, beginning discussions about settling Lockerbie. All of it had to be handled in utmost secrecy: Families of the Lockerbie victims had long since organized into a fierce, somewhat unruly advocacy group, lobbying for arrests, sanctions, and anything that would amount to a facsimile of justice. Notice of a dialogue with the monsters from Tripoli would have summoned a righteous explosion from families whose loved ones looked on from pictures on night tables, from home movies and fading memories.

Then came 9/11, and the dialogue was dramatically transformed. The United States and its Western allies were suddenly in serious need of one thing Libya could provide: intelligence.

And so it was that Kousa, 21 years after his expulsion from England and a month after 9/11, wound up stepping off the plane at Heathrow to be greeted by a delegation of top officials from the diplomatic and intelligence arms of both Britain and America. In his arms were dossiers with the names and locations of Islamic terrorists in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

Getting past Lockerbie

Back they'd gone—now a sizable crowd—to Bandar's place, a neutral ground, courtesy of the Saudis. It was three days after the United States had begun bombing the Afghanistan refuge of al Qaeda. The morning meetings between Kousa and William Burns, the assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs, dealt with payments to the Lockerbie families, whether the Libyans would admit culpability for the attack, and a quid pro quo of disarmament. Libya was widely known to have chemical weapons of mass destruction, and maybe biological agents. Kousa, told that all of it would have to be given up, was noncommittal but attentive. His country was run by one man—and that man needed to agree to all of this.

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It wasn't until the late afternoon that Musa Kousa and Ben Bonk had gotten to sit down and chat about Mateen Cleaves, point guard on Michigan State's 2000 team, how he dominated Florida in the NCAA Championship game—giving the school its first national title since Magic led them over Larry Bird and Indiana State in 1979.

This wasn't just throat-clearing. To understand the "war on terror" and the ethical dilemmas of dealing on the "dark side," you need to be at this table, inside the mansion of an ambassador from the home country of 15 of the 19 September 11 hijackers, talking to a smiling, stylish gentleman who allegedly killed a planeful of passengers before they had a chance to put down their tray tables. There are families of those kids on the Lockerbie flight who—if they happen to read this short passage—may curse. Or vomit. Musa Kousa and his boss inhabit their nightmares. Can such behavior—the slaughter of innocents—ever be forgiven? Does being able to sit and talk basketball with a representative of the U.S. government represent a kind of absolution?

But America was in need. A second wave of attacks was anticipated, and U.S. intelligence assets in the Arab world were thin. They needed expert eyes—and expertise comes in many guises.

"Look, Musa, you can put Lockerbie past you," Ben said. "We want it settled. You want it settled. We need to move past that now."

Kousa seemed relieved—he'd waited years to hear what Bonk had just said. The Libyans were ready to pay—and pay handsomely— to make reparations to the families of those who died. "We want to get past it, too, Benny."

Then Bonk got deadly serious. "Everything has changed after 9/11," he said. "Two things. We're going to need you to give up your destructive weapons. And, most importantly, we'll need assistance to fight the terrorists." Kousa said he understood, and, that evening, he gave Bonk key names, including that of Ibn al-Sheikh al-Libi, a Libyan operative who would soon be the first major U.S. capture in the so-called "war on terror," and several others that would help the U.S. government unwind a Pakistani group involved in the spreading of nuclear-weapons technology to other Muslim countries.

Overtures from Gadhafi

Libyan cooperation on these intelligence finds marked the most significant gesture of reconciliation between Gadhafi and the United States to date. Nevertheless, while it suggested an imminent breakthrough in relations, with the possibility of a comprehensive agreement, progress wound up being slow. The first issue—to quietly settle the financial settlement for the Lockerbee families and decide what Libya would or would not admit to—stretched through the coming year. Also, Bonk left CTC in January 2002 to head up the CIA's Mideast division for the Directorate of Intelligence. With a key connector to the Libyans and Musa Kousa having been "repurposed"—as they say in bureaucratese—contact between the CIA and Libyans dwindled throughout 2002. No one, it seemed, was on hand to fill the breach.

Not until March of 2003 did things get moving again. That month, Tony Blair contacted George Bush with news that the Libyans had given the British government a message: Gadhafi now wanted to get personally involved in the negotiations. Gadhafi himself? That was a surprise.

With talks having been jumpstarted, Tenet needed someone to go to Tripoli and pursue a deal with the Libyans. The person he found was Steve Kappes, a respected operator with 22 years of experience in the CIA's clandestine service, a college football lineman and former Marine with a ramrod-straight carriage, soft voice, and gift for terse, verbal precision. He was, at that point, associate deputy director for operations—number two in the Directorate of Operations (DO)—and being groomed to take over the top DO job. When Tenet brought Kappes to the Oval office in late March, Bush took an immediate liking to the former Marine, who seemed like a man who was not easily impressed or easily swayed.

Bush, Dick Cheney, Tenet, and Kappes talked over the coming days about some of the complexities of a disarmament negotiation with the Libyan leader. Everyone saw opportunities, but also perils. Dealing with Gadhafi would be challenging. He had absolute power in Libya and could shape a situation, and the people under him, in any way he liked. His assurances, if he made any, might be difficult to collect on. Cheney, in particular, voiced skepticism. He was thinking of the broad, unspoken U.S. strategy of altering the behavior of sovereign states through the use of U.S. force. Gadhafi "had behaved badly for a long time," Cheney said, and "you don't want to reward bad behavior" with an agreement or a suggestion of absolution.

All of these discussions were also taking place at a time when U.S. troops were massing in the Persian Gulf to invade a rogue state. What did it mean, then, that Moammar Gadhafi's men were making overtures to accelerate the negotiations about disarmament? Was it a vindication of the coming war? Did it show that an outlaw state was ready to bend to America's new rules and new order? Or was it a matter of coincidence?

Bush, for his part, said he saw Gadhafi's offer to engage in the talks as proof that Iraq was a game changer. But several foreign policy and intelligence advisers told Bush they viewed it in a different light. Iraq may have been a modest contributing factor, they said, but if the United States hadn't long insisted that the financial settlement be completed before getting to disarmament, Gadhafi might have made this move years ago. Bush nodded along. All that would be immaterial. The timing of Gadhafi's overture would speak volumes, whatever the underlying reality. The key, he said, was "to make sure we get some deliverable from this process." Then, an announcement could be made that the new Pax Americana was working, with Libya as proof. That, alone, would shape behavior. It wasn't just a matter of presentation. Perception management—the sending of a "signal" to the world—was the goal.

Perceptions aside, disarmament had been the goal of a long, patient conversation, dating back to secret negotiations between the United States and Libya in 1992 over the Lockerbie crash, to Bandar's meeting with Tenet and McLaughlin in 1998 in Jiddah, to Ben Bonk's liaison with Musa Kousa on intelligence issues in the months after 9/11. Bonk and Kousa's conversations, productive though they were, had been running on a separate track from another crucial dialogue: a

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final settlement with the Lockerbie families. That had to be completed first, U.S. and British diplomats agreed, and taken off the table before negotiations about Libya's disarmament could commence in earnest. "It needed to be one step completed, before the next could begin," said a senior State Department official involved in the talks. "You didn't want these families and their compensation to be mixed with the dismantling of chemical weapons facilities." That hurdle had finally been overcome, quietly, in May 2002. The agreement that was reached wouldn't appease the families or lessen the anger and grief that had driven the sanctions against Libya for nearly 15 years, but it was money. Each family of a Lockerbie victim would receive $10 million, for a total Libyan payout of $2.7 billion. Now, finally, Libya and the United States could talk about disarmament in earnest.

For the job of pursuing the deal, Bush agreed with Tenet that Kappes would be a good choice to negotiate with the megalomanical Gadhafi. Clearly, Kappes was a man who could keep a secret, and Bush gave him one: No one at State or Defense, not even Rumsfeld or Powell, should know about this major initiative. No one.

Watching the neighbors get rich

For the man with whom Kappes would be dealing, the choice was not about whether to disarm. Gadhafi knew he'd have to in order to win the sanction-free international acceptance he craved. It was how to do it in a way that wouldn't make him seem diminished among the Libyan people, as well as other Arab nations, and wouldn't make his previous decisions—which had created more than a decade of sanctions and isolation for his country—seem misguided.

Gadhafi came to power in a bloodless military coup in 1969 and has always seen himself as a visionary leader, espousing his own political system, the "Third Universal Theory," which combined socialism and a brand of Islam drawn from the country's tribal practices that he expected to be implemented by Libyan people in a form of direct democracy. He used oil money in the '70s and '80s to promote this vision abroad, funding terrorism that he felt, with messianic grandeur, would bring the end to capitalism and communism.

What occurred, instead, was international censure and sanctions. In 1986, even before Lockerbie, the United States imposed bans on business transactions with Libya and travel to the country. Starting in 1992, the United Nations imposed an arms and air embargo and banned the export of equipment for oil refining to the country. This seemed to trap Libya in a sandy box while its neighbors grew fast on '90s oil money. The country's per capita GDP in 2003 of around $6,400 was lower than many of the region's OPEC nations and unevenly distributed in a poorly diversified economy. The country—slightly larger than Alaska, with a population of six million, 97 percent of them Sunni, and with 54 percent of its gross domestic product coming from oil exports—is more a Bedouin desert kingdom than some of its Arab brethren. Under the sanctions, the oil business was flagging, as Libya was having trouble getting engineers and spare parts to keep the wells flowing at top capacity. That was causing economic hardship and leading to the growth of clandestine opposition groups.

Mindful of the pressures Gadhafi faced domestically, Kappes and his associates proceeded delicately. Throughout the summer, Steve Kappes and his British counterpart, MI6 counterterrorism chief Mark Allen, whistle-stopped the globe, meeting with Kousa and other Libyan fixers in a dance of shared interests. Kousa, like Kappes, seemed to want to get the headstrong Libyan leader to the table to construct an agreement. The men talked about different proffers, different tactics, things that might sweeten the deal, and, most often, the mind of Gadhafi.

Later that summer, Kappes and Allen met in Tripoli with Gadhafi for the first time. During the meeting, they pressed him for specifics on Libyan weapons. That Gadhafi had chemical agents, especially mustard gas, was commonly known. Whether he had a delivery system that was effective, and in sound working order, was another matter. Through a key source inside Pakistani nuclear entrepreneur A.Q. Khan's network, however, they knew that he had collected a warehouse or two of centrifuge parts. Yet the Libyan leader was coy about the full extent of his weaponry, both chemical and nuclear. The team asked the weapons question countless times. And Gadhafi answered in countless ways, while tapping his substantial charisma—his "legitimacy," as Kousa would say. There were not only the issues of what Libya might do, Gadhafi said at one point, but also issues of what it should do as a sovereign state. Who, also, would ensure the country's security if neighbors did not subscribe to Gadhafi's newly enlightened stance of disarmament? What is the nature of binding agreements between independent states, and what are the limits of such agreements? And around the talks went.

With any dictator or authoritarian, there is the primacy of personality, writ large by power. Whatever the material points of dispute, Gadhafi, in a way, seemed to relish the encounters, turning to Kappes and Allen as proxies for the type of high-level, first-world engagements he was starved for. It was that need, as much as any, that initially brought him to the table.

After one high-stress visit in the late summer, Kappes returned to Langley after an all-might flight, snappily attired and clear-eyed, and met John Moseman, Tenet's chief of staff, in the hallway.

"You're looking amazingly fresh," Moseman said, "after days of combat with Gadhafi."

"Call me crazy, John," Kappes replied, "but I think I'm beginning to like this guy."

How both sides could "save face"

Friendly as the talks had been, however, tangible progress was slow in coming. By late September 2003, Libya had still not presented the "deliverable" Bush needed: a humbled, acquiescent Gadhafi succumbing to the new world order. Nor would Gadhafi admit to possessing the nuclear program that that United States knew he did. Even the Lockerbie settlement was turning out to be full of obstacles. Although the UN sanctions were due to be lifted that September, the United States wanted more concessions before lifting its own unilateral sanctions against the country. Libya had to give up its weapons, cut ties with terrorist groups, and make a forceful public statement of its changed intentions and character. As for Gadhafi, unless the

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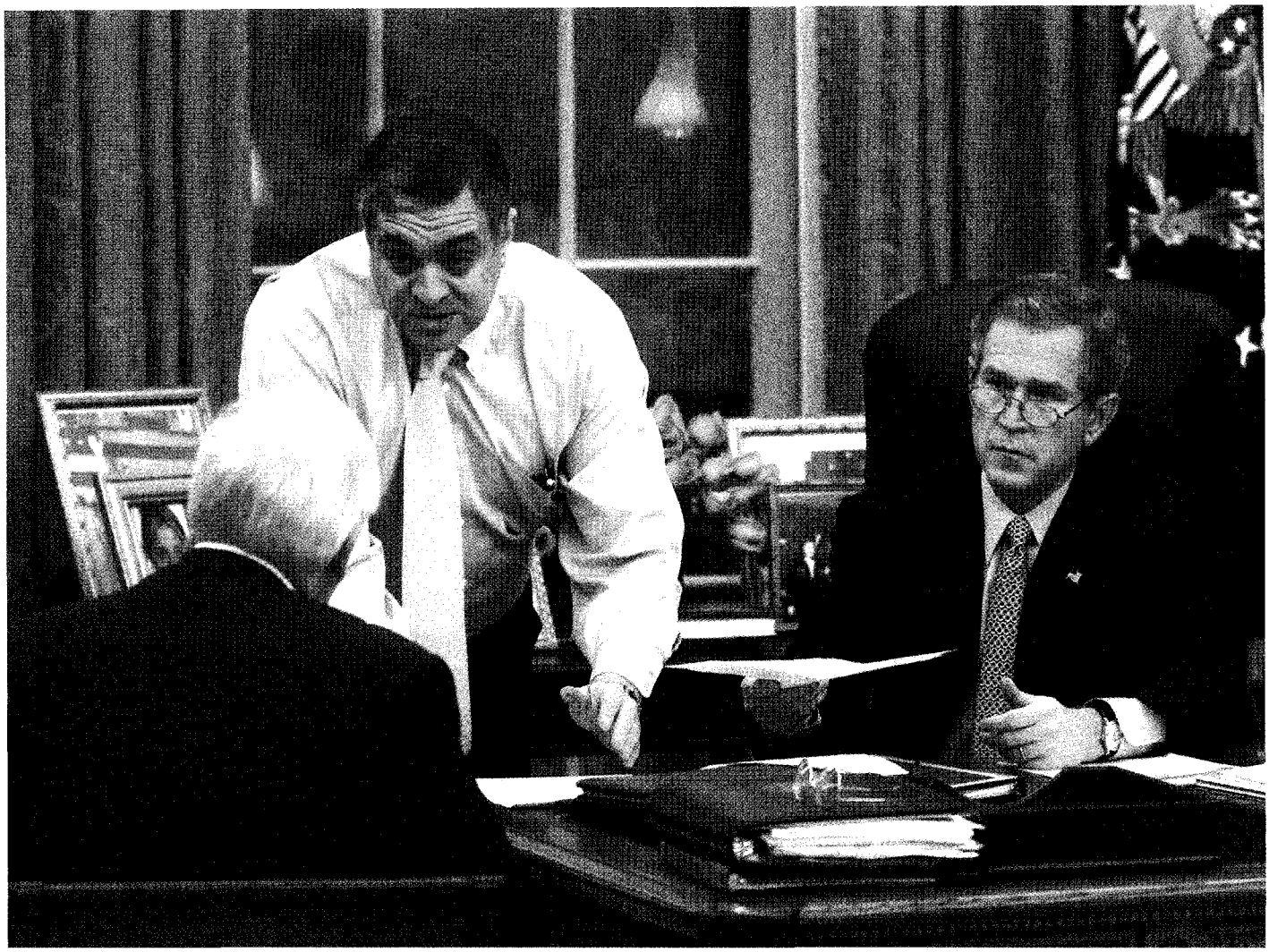

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Bush, Cheney and then CIA Director George Tenet had discussed how the timing of Gadhafi's overture would speak volumes, whatever the underlying reality.

United States joined the United Nations in lifting sanctions, he would not fully pay the Lockerbie settlement. And so it stood.

The breakthrough didn't happen until October 2003, when a U.S. warship intercepted a ship called the BBC China, which was headed from Dubai carrying centrifuge equipment earmarked for Libya. The takedown of the ship—the product of CIA's years-long infiltration of A. Q. Khan's network—changed the game. Now, Gadhafi had a reason to admit publicly to his clandestine program, and with less embarrassment. Getting found out sometimes happens, after all.

At the next session at the negotiating table in Tripoli, the Libyan leader offered Kappes and Allen a Cheshire cat's smile, and progress picked up. Using the seizure as a starting point, as others were doing publicly, Gadhafi laid out what the U.S. and Britain secretly knew, for the most part, about his nuclear program. In November, some of the particulars of his disarmament protocol were decided. By December, the United States and Britain would be touring Libyan facilities, along with representatives from the International Atomic Energy Agency. They looked at centrifuge parts and components, many of them still crated. In exchange, Gadhafi got what he wanted: The sanctions were lifted. Among the country's ruling elite, the whole matter was viewed as being artfully handled, with no discernible loss of face by the leader of the revolution.

As for George W. Bush, he wound up getting to say, countless times, the thing he desperately wanted to say to help offset the crumbling Iraq experiment, a measurable face-saving aria: that Gadhafi had given up his weapons because of how the U.S. invasion of Iraq had changed the landscape.

Of course, neither Bush nor Gadhafi was really telling the truth. The key to the agreement between the two sides—all but written into the fine print—was that each would get to "save face." Naturally, this is always a primary goal of nations and their leaders, whether they are democratic or authoritarian. And so the White House worked diligently to make the case that Libya's disarmament would not have happened without the show of force in Iraq. As the Bush administration well knew, however, the breakthrough had occurred mainly because a resistance to "reward[ing] bad behavior" had, for once, been overcome. In other words, much to the chagrin of White House hawks, the disarming of Gadhafi wasn't due to the Bush administration following its "new rules" for angrily confronting rogue states. It was due to the Bush administration setting them, for once, aside. ♦

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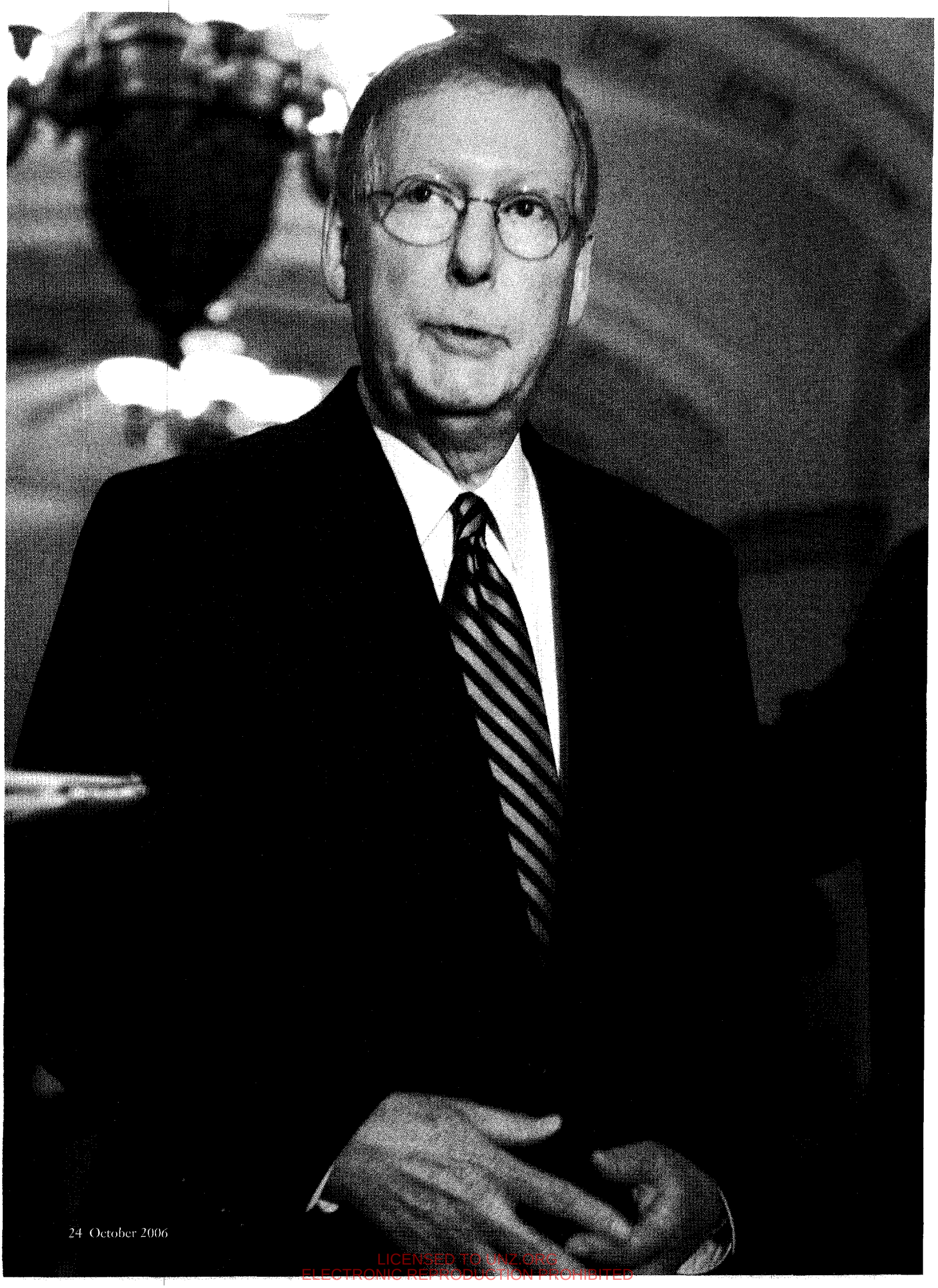

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Meet the New Boss

Quietly, Senate Republicans have already chosen Mitch McConnell as their next leader—because Congress just isn't partisan enough.

By Zachary Roth and Cliff Schecter

One of the Senate's quirkier traditions was inaugurated in the late 1990s by then-Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.). On certain summer Thursdays, Lott decreed, members should leave their customary dark blue and gray suits at home and, as a tribute to southern fashion, instead conduct the people's business in pale blue seersucker. Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), a fellow southerner and Lott's successor as leader, has kept the ritual alive. Lawmakers no doubt welcome the chance to don a cooler fabric in the sweltering Washington heat, but the style doesn't always produce the best optics: On a Thursday in mid-June, many of the Republicans who gathered to discuss the situation in Iraq—where the American death toll had that day hit 2,500—looked less like U.S. senators gravely weighing issues of war and peace, and more like Pat Boone.

But in their suggestion of a party dangerously out of touch with popular sentiment, the outfits were, perhaps, appropriate. Over the previous few weeks, positions on Iraq had begun to harden in a way that left the GOP politically vulnerable. Thanks to pressure from the White House and a short-lived uptick in support for the war in the wake of the killing of the Jihadist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, House Republicans were rapidly lining up behind a resolution affirming support for President Bush's "stay-the-course" approach. Meanwhile, Senate Democrats were unifying behind a resolution of their own, backed by leadership, calling for troop withdrawals to begin this year. With the public already favoring a pullout and growing only more frustrated with the war effort every day, the coming clash between these two positions looked likely to favor Democrats.

The party was not in total agreement, however. Earlier that week, Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) had filed a sweeping amendment to a defense bill requiring all U.S. troops to be pulled out of Iraq by July 2007. Knowing his measure would attract little support as written, and hoping to maintain a uni-

Zachary Roth is an editor of *The Washington Monthly*. **Cliff Schecter** is a regular contributor to *The Huffington Post* and a weekly guest on "The Young Turks" radio program. He worked on Bill Clinton's reelection in 1996 and on the campaign of Sen. McConnell's Democratic challenger in 2002.

Photography by Sam Kittner

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fied Democratic message, Kerry had informed Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), who was managing the defense bill, that he was not yet ready to offer it for a vote. Warner agreed to give Kerry more time, then left the Capitol building to attend a memorial service at the Pentagon for victims of 9/11.

Soon afterwards, Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), the Senate number two, rose to speak, his light blue tie elegantly setting off the pinstripes. A pale, graying, and somewhat slight man of 64, McConnell looks more like a financial planner than a politician. He has an unblinking, vaguely android-like stare and gives the impression, even when speaking, of wanting to avoid being noticed. But today, he could not keep a hint of a smile from flickering across his normally impassive features. "Colleagues on the other side have said they were going to offer an amendment to advocate withdrawal by the end of the year," he reminded the chamber. "Let's have that debate." With that, McConnell took Kerry's measure, scratched out the Democrat's name, replaced it with his own, and offered it for a vote.

The move seemed to take even McConnell's Republican colleagues by surprise. Frist, who had just arrived on the floor—white spats complementing the seersucker—referred to the "Kerry amendment," and appeared momentarily confused when told that the pending measure was now, in fact, the McConnell amendment. Even C-SPAN was fooled, informing viewers in an on-screen graphic that the Senate was considering the Kerry amendment. Whatever its name, the measure was rejected by a vote of 93-6. Democrats denounced what Kerry called a "fictitious vote," and even Warner tried to distance himself from McConnell's maneuver, informing his colleagues that it had been carried out in his absence.

McConnell, though, was unashamed. He stood, grinning, on the Senate floor for a long time, his hands clasped placidly in front of him as if at church, as colleagues came up to chat—one gave him a congratulatory pat on the back as he passed. Then he took a victory lap around the press gallery, telling reporters "it has been interesting to watch the Democrats have this debate within their caucus," while Kerry and Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) struggled to respond. As McConnell anticipated, the storyline that emerged in news reports over the next few days was that the Senate had overwhelmingly rejected a quick Iraq pullout and that the Iraq issue was uniting Republicans and dividing Democrats.

The maneuver was typical of McConnell, the Senate Majority Whip, who over a 22-year Senate career has earned a reputation as a shrewd parliamentary tactician and a ruthless partisan warrior. Those qualities are a major reason why, while the outcome of the November midterms remains up in the air, one election has already been all but decided. In January 2007, Frist will step down, and for the last two years, almost below the radar, McConnell has had the race to replace him as Senate Republican leader—and if Republicans maintain control, Senate Majority Leader—virtually locked up.

That someone with McConnell's political style stands to assume what is arguably the third-most-powerful elected post in the federal government speaks volumes about the state of the contemporary Republican Party—and about Washington in general. McConnell is a staunch conservative and a master of procedure, but no piece of landmark legislation bears his name. Almost the only issue on which he has a national profile is campaign-finance reform, and on that, he's known as the man who fought it at every turn. Republican strategist Grover Norquist—who once compared bipartisanship to date-rape and played a key role in creating the system that uses corporate money to maintain Republican control—told us that if he could pick the president, McConnell would be among his top three choices. (Jeb Bush would be another, and Norquist was uncharacteristically coy about the third.)

Indeed, McConnell's political persona—with its focus on bare-knuckled partisanship and support for a money-driven legislative system—embodies the very qualities that have helped reverse Republican political fortunes so dramatically over the last year and a half, and have led directly to a series of government scandals and slipups. In uniting around Mitch McConnell, Republicans are, in effect, doubling down on the governing style that got them, and us, into this mess in the first place.

Not your father's Senate

The Senate has long been the more deliberative, less partisan of the two houses of Congress—the saucer that's used to cool the House's legislation, as George Washington is said to have put it. For much of the 20th century, senators saw themselves less as creatures of their party than as independent actors—statesmen, even—charged with dispassionately weighing the issues of the day. In order to avoid having to hold countless votes on mundane procedural issues, senators often simply request, and receive, unanimous consent to proceed. Such a system requires a basic level of mutual cooperation and respect, since any recalcitrant member could, in theory, object, and thereby bring the whole chamber to a halt. Because 60 votes (at one time it was 67) are required to pass controversial legislation, leaders customarily have had little choice but to govern in a conciliatory spirit.

The first significant sign of a shift away from this model occurred in 1989 with an event over in the House: the election of Newt Gingrich as Minority Whip. Gingrich and his followers, many of them backbenchers, sought an ideological revolution to ensure that Congress was run in accordance with strict conservative principles. They viewed their party's leadership as overly accommodating to Democrats, and sought to overturn the established seniority-based system by which the House was governed. Gingrich soon began pressuring GOP moderates not to vote with the Democrats—not only to increase his party's unity, but also to deny moderate and conservative Democrats the cover they needed to buck their own leaders. By forcing these Democrats, many of whom represented conservative districts, to vote with their more liberal party leadership, Gingrich reasoned, he could make them unpopular at home, and ultimately beat them, creating a Republican majority. "It was a deliberate strategy of emphasizing differences and becoming intolerant of compromise," says Steven Smith, an expert on Congress at Washington University in St. Louis.

It took a while for that strategy to filter into the Senate. Before the 1994 Republican takeover, the chamber still functioned under the assumption that you needed to work across the aisle to get anything significant accomplished. "Everything was totally bipartisan," says a former senior Senate Democratic aide. "The first thing you did [when crafting legislation] was, 'who's

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your Republican?' That was just how you operated." But in the first year of the Clinton administration, conservative opinion leaders like William Kristol began urging Republicans to adopt a scorched-earth policy of opposition to the president—most prominently over his health-care plan, but also more broadly. Around the same time, Senate Republican leader Bob Dole, who was eyeing a presidential run and feeling the need to prove his conservative bona fides, announced that he intended to block Clinton at every turn.

Soon after, freshmen Republican senators like Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania and James Inhofe of Oklahoma, who had cut their teeth in the House, began importing Gingrich's tactics to their new home. Early in 1995, when moderate Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.) voted against a GOP-backed constitutional amendment mandating balanced budgets (those were the days!), angry colleagues lobbied to have him stripped of the chairmanship of the Appropriations Committee. By 2001, Sen. Jim Jeffords of Vermont was so fed up with the Republican move toward strict partisan discipline and away from the moderate, consensus-based deal-making on which he had always prided himself, that he left the party, briefly handing control of the Senate back to the Democrats. "I think the impetus for a lot of this came from Republicans," says Norman Ornstein, a congressional expert at the conservative American Enterprise Institute and a co-author of *The Broken Branch: How Congress is Failing America*. "And it's been exacerbated by having Republicans with all the reins of power."

The Senate's shift toward increased party discipline has been accompanied by a growing willingness to use the legislative process to benefit the Republican Party's financial backers. The more tightly the majority leadership controls the Senate's agenda, the more likely it is that special interests will conclude that getting anything accomplished requires working with that leader-

Bluegrass Baron

In the late 1990s, Mitch McConnell placed a personal phone call to a female student at the University of Louisville. He wasn't setting up a romantic liaison. The woman was running as a conservative candidate for student body president, and McConnell, a sitting U.S. senator, was calling to offer unsolicited campaign advice.

McConnell's phone call was not out of character. Over the last 20 years, he has inserted himself into almost every significant Kentucky political race from governor to, well, student body president, ensuring that almost all major GOP elected officials in the state owe their success in large part to him. McConnell was among the first Kentucky politicians to understand that, unlike in some other Southern states, cultural issues such as gun control and abortion would be more effective than coded racial appeals, since Kentucky has a relatively small black population, and therefore a lower level of white resentment. In 1994, he met with Ron Lewis, a clergyman and Christian bookstore owner, at a Bob Evans restaurant in Louisville. "They ought to put a historic marker there because that was where the modern Kentucky Republican Party was born," Al Cross, a veteran Kentucky political columnist, told me. At that meeting, McConnell convinced Lewis that by using an anti-Clinton message of cultural conservatism, he could win a House district that had never once gone Republican. He then consolidated control over Lewis's candidacy by getting him to replace his campaign manager with a McConnell staffer, Terry Carmack. That same year, McConnell also persuaded Ed Whitfield, a Democrat, to run as a Republican for a Western Kentucky congressional seat. Both Lewis and Whitfield were elected.

Since that initial success, McConnell has expanded his influence. In 1996, he played a major role in the election to Congress of Republican Rep. Anne Northup (in a sign of the close ties between McConnell and Northup, Carmack is now Northup's chief-of-staff). Then two years later, he engineered the election to the U.S. Senate of fellow Republican Jim Bunning. In 2004, McConnell all but took control of Bunning's re-election campaign in its final weeks, after the former major league pitcher had damaged himself with a series of bizarre public statements. McConnell forbade Bunning from speaking to the press, and helped the incumbent eke out a narrow win. That same year, McConnell also had a major hand in Republican Rep. Geoff Davis's successful run for a U.S. House seat. Lewis, Whitfield, Northup, Davis, and Bunning all remain firm McConnell allies.

Perhaps McConnell's greatest coup, for a while, was the election in 2003 of another Republican, Ernie Fletcher as Kentucky governor. Earlier that year, McConnell had invited Fletcher—then a congressman who had expressed no statewide ambitions—to his Capitol Hill office, and convinced him to run. Fletcher agreed, and even named Hunter Bates, McConnell's longtime chief of staff and the manager of his 2002 re-election campaign, as his running-mate. Bates, though, was such a creature of Washington—and of McConnell—that he was quickly knocked off the ticket when a court found that he had lived for so long in the D.C. area that he was ineligible to be elected to political office in Kentucky.

Fletcher won the race, but soon proved to be a major embarrassment to Republicans: He was indicted this year on corruption charges stemming from a system of rewarding political allies with state jobs. Though he says he has no plans to step down, his approval ratings are in the low 30s. McConnell, fearing that other Republican elected officials like Northup and Davis could become casualties of voters' anger with Fletcher and the party, has dropped his one-time protégé, and is said to favor replacing him with Whitfield. In an effort to force Fletcher out of office, McConnell has met with the state's leading Republicans to urge them not to support the governor. Given McConnell's clout in Kentucky politics, Fletcher's days in office may be numbered. – *Cliff Schecter*

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ship. Demands that lobbying firms hire only Republicans will carry more weight because lobbyists recognize that Republicans alone control the legislative process.

Still, until now, Senate leaders have mostly been reacting to external forces pushing the chamber in a more partisan direction, rather than leading the shift themselves. George Mitchell, the Maine Democrat who ran the Senate from 1989 to 1995, and his successors, Dole and Lott, were all fierce partisans, but they saw themselves first and foremost as dealmakers, and defined success by the number of pieces of major legislation passed on their watch.

Frist has been a very different kind of leader. As a newcomer considering a presidential run, he has had no objection to turning the chamber into an arm of the Republican governing machine. But his incompetence has prevented him from doing so. His weak grasp of Senate procedure has allowed his more senior counterpart, Harry Reid, to outmaneuver him time and again. "On many days with Frist in charge, the place is barely functioning," says a Senate Democratic aide.

As the gambit over Kerry's Iraq amendment showed, McConnell has no such weaknesses. He's a master of Senate rules and procedures, and he harbors no presidential aspirations that might distract him from his job. But unlike earlier leaders, he doesn't keep score by legislative accomplishments. For the first time in recent memory, the Senate will be run by a leader with both the ability and the desire to use the institution entirely for partisan advantage.

The hustler

When Addison Mitchell McConnell was two years old, he was diagnosed with polio. Though he remained able to walk, doctors, fearing that pressure could make his legs develop abnormally, instructed his mother to keep her son off his feet for several years. Adhering to this stricture seems to have forged in McConnell a kind of dogged determination, as well as a faith that patient, disciplined effort will ultimately be rewarded. Today, the only sign of his childhood illness is a slight limp when he walks down steps.

McConnell has been in training all his life for the job he will take over next year. He caught the political bug as a young man, getting elected student body president at the University of Louisville, then student bar president at the University of Kentucky law school. After poor eyesight kept him out of Vietnam, he came to Washington to intern with Kentucky's Republican senator, John Sherman Cooper, and eventually worked in the Justice Department during the Ford administration. In 1978, McConnell won his first elective office, county judge executive for Jefferson County, but he had his eye on bigger things.

A few years later, a group of Kentucky political journalists threw a birthday party for *Louisville Times* columnist Bob Hill. Hill had a famously poor relationship with McConnell, so, as a joke, Hill's friends invited McConnell along. McConnell arrived with an attractive blonde on his arm (he would later marry Elaine Chao, now the Secretary of Labor), then proceeded, calmly and methodically, to lay out for the assembled reporters his plan to win a U.S. Senate seat in 1984 by using a socially conservative message and hard-hitting TV advertising. Few of McConnell's listeners took him seriously—Kentucky was a solidly Democratic state, and his prospective opponent, Sen. Dee Huddleston, was popular. But McConnell followed his plan to the letter: To make the point that Huddleston was not spending enough time in the Capitol, McConnell ran TV ads that showed bloodhounds sniffing around Washington trying to pick up the senator's scent, and ended with a shot of Huddleston's name plaque visible on his unoccupied Senate desk. Helped by Ronald Reagan's landslide presidential win that year, McConnell pulled off an upset victory by less than half a percentage point.

Since arriving in Washington, McConnell has used two major tactics to get to the top. He has ensured himself a steady flow of campaign dollars by going all out on behalf of the Republican Party's financial backers—and has then used these contributions to build his own, and his party's, political power. At the same time, he seems to understand that with his grey demeanor and indifferent communication skills, he's poorly suited to adopt the kind of high-profile, media-friendly causes that most U.S. senators (think John McCain) compete to associate themselves with. Instead—like the short, unathletic kid who wins a place on the high-school basketball team by hustling, playing defense, and washing the uniforms—he has gained the support of his colleagues by shrewdly focusing on the less glamorous, behind-the-scenes grunt work, while acting as a frontman for unpopular causes that bring negative publicity others would rather avoid.

McConnell cut his teeth by running the Ethics and Rules committees in the '90s. These were low-profile positions, but ones that gave him crucial leverage with his colleagues on the quality-of-life issues—assigning office space, and overseeing the Senate restaurant, for instance—that senators care about. In 1997, he took over the chairmanship of the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC)—a position that allowed him to decide which GOP candidates received money and other electoral help from the national party, and so helped build his support within the caucus. The following year, with voters angry over the Republican Congress's impeachment of President Clinton, many expected the GOP to lose Senate seats. But McConnell counseled his candidates to adopt a strategy of barraging their opponents with negative advertising, and it proved enough to avoid any losses. (In the House, by contrast, Republicans lost five seats.) "He understands politics as well as anybody I've ever seen," says Dave Hansen, who was the NRSC's political director under McConnell. The Kentuckian's colleagues seem to have appreciated his contribution: When Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) challenged him for the NRSC job the following year, McConnell crushed him by 39 votes to 13.

McConnell also used the NRSC position to protect and deepen the relationship between the Republican Party and its biggest financial backers. In 1998, John McCain was pushing legislation that would have raised cigarette taxes and increased regulation of the tobacco industry—which, aside from being by far the GOP's biggest corporate backer, industry-wide, at the time, was also a major player in McConnell's home state. Fearing that voters would punish Republicans in November if they appeared to be favoring their contributors over public health, McConnell at first advised Lott, then the Senate leader,

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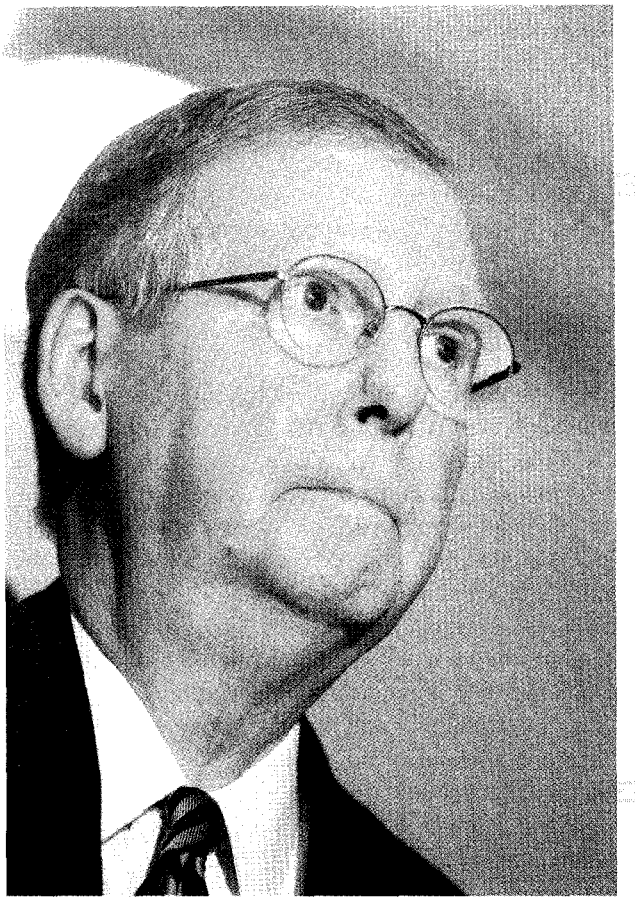

Like the short, unathletic kid who wins a place on the high-school basketball team by hustling, playing defense, and washing the uniforms, McConnell has gained the support of his colleagues by shrewdly focusing on the grunt work while acting as a frontman for unpopular causes.

to support a version of the bill. But McConnell's calculus changed after a poll, sponsored by the tobacco industry, revealed that Americans placed a relatively low priority on fighting smoking. Republican senators up for reelection, he concluded, could oppose the bill with impunity. And at a closed-door meeting of the GOP Senate caucus, McConnell, in his role as NRSC chair, stood up to announce that the tobacco industry had agreed to run ads in support of Republicans, defending them against Democratic charges of killing the bill. "We can walk away from this," McConnell now advised Lott, according to *Time* magazine. Days later, McCain's bill was dead.

McConnell also knows how to use threats. When a group of Republican senators signed onto a campaign-finance reform measure in the late '90s, McConnell, in his position as NRSC chair, advised them that they could expect no electoral support from the committee unless they switched their position. At least one, Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) did so after receiving McConnell's warning. Then in 1999, when the Committee for Economic Development (CED)—a trade group representing large corporations—announced its support for a ban on soft money, McConnell wrote a furious letter, on NRSC letterhead, to leaders of companies belonging to CED, denouncing the group's "all-out campaign to eviscerate private-sector participation in politics," and urging them to quit the organization. "I hope you will resign from CED," he scribbled at the bottom of one copy. Many recipients of the letter saw in it an implicit threat that, unless they withdrew from CED and stopped supporting reform efforts, their companies would receive unfavorable treatment from Congress.

The campaign-finance fight also brought out McConnell's willingness—even eagerness—to absorb negative attention on behalf of colleagues. For all of his personal colorlessness, he appeared to relish his role as the *bete noir* of the reform movement. After the good government group Common Cause labeled him the "Darth Vader of campaign-finance reform" in 1997, he opened a press conference by declaring, with a hint of a smile, "Darth Vader has arrived." But the humor concealed a serious purpose. McConnell understood at the time that many GOP senators feared the end of soft money but were afraid of the negative publicity that opposing McCain's crusade would bring. By volunteering to play the bad cop—confident about his own re-election prospects as the most powerful political figure in an increasingly red state (see "Bluegrass Baron" p.27)—McConnell gained crucial support within the caucus. "There were a lot of his colleagues who supported the same goal he had, who were appreciative that somebody was out there doing it and they didn't have to," says a former Senate leadership aide.

McConnell has always contended that his position on campaign-finance reform derives from a belief in the importance of freedom of expression. Opponents of campaign-finance regulations argue that money is a form of speech, and banning or limiting it therefore contravenes the First Amendment. His claim to be standing on principle is supported by a history of voting—in defiance of his party leadership—against efforts to pass a constitutional amendment banning flag-burning, on similar grounds of free speech. But in 1999 he suggested a more partisan motive,

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telling *The Washington Post*, "Take away soft money and we wouldn't be in the majority in the House and the majority in the Senate, and couldn't win back the White House."

Whatever his motivation, McConnell's full-throated defense of the right of politicians to take unlimited amounts of money from corporations helped make him a popular man among Senate Republicans, and put him in a position to make his move into the top ranks of leadership. In the shakeup that saw Frist replace Lott as leader in January 2003, McConnell was elected whip. But he didn't stop there: Frist soon made clear that he planned to serve only two two-year terms. By early 2004, McConnell had begun his campaign for the top job, meeting discreetly with members, listening to their concerns, calling in his chits from the campaign-finance reform battle, and asking straight out for his colleagues' support. "He has systematically and methodically gone to every member. The only real purpose of that meeting is for him to make sure that he's got that vote," says Tripp Baird, a former aide to Sen. Mel Martinez (R-Fla.) during this period. "When we came to town, same thing. I mean he went to all of the freshmen. The first meeting with them was about this. He was real quick. He went in and secured the vote. Done."

In addition, over the last five election cycles, his Bluegrass Political Action Committee has contributed to at least 40 of his 54 current Senate GOP colleagues. In September 2004, the month when he emerged as the only viable contender for the leader's job, McConnell donated $250,000 from his campaign account to the NRSC, then the largest ever donation to the committee. (In return, he received a gold-plated trophy from NRSC chair George Allen.) By the end of the month, McConnell had used his PAC to donate more money to his colleagues than any other GOP senator except Frist. "Having a strong leadership PAC is very important in securing a leadership position, because senators remember that," says Brian Darling, the conservative Heritage Foundation's Senate liaison. "When they're in trouble out on the campaign trail, when a senator gives them money...that is appreciated by senators."

But it's not just the amount that it has distributed that makes McConnell's leadership PAC noteworthy—it's the donors from whom it has raised money. McConnell has essentially abandoned the traditional small-donor direct-mail Republican fundraising model, in favor of large corporate contributors seeking legislative favors. Last year, the Bluegrass PAC did not raise a single dollar from a contributor who gave less than $200. By contrast, almost half of the money raised by Frist in the same year came from such contributors.

The strategy paid off. During the summer of 2004, Sen. Santorum openly expressed his interest in the leadership position—though he allowed that, "I am not as laser-beamed as Senator McConnell." But by the end of September, Santorum, realizing that McConnell had already locked up enough support to be a virtual shoo-in, declared that he would instead seek the whip's job. Since then, Trent Lott has publicly mused about making a run for his old post. Lott, an experienced legislator and smooth floor operator, retains a surprising degree of sympathy and respect amongst his colleagues, many of whom felt his punishment for expressing a fondness for segregation was excessive (overt racism is apparently low on many Senate Republicans' list of sins). But no knowledgeable observers see Lott as a real threat to McConnell. Still, the Kentuckian is taking nothing for granted. Since November 2004, he has given over $300,000 to the campaigns and PACs of his Senate colleagues and GOP challengers. Two months before the election, he has already given the maximum amount to almost every Republican Senate candidate in a competitive race.

No surrender

A recent press conference at the Capitol, on the subject of energy legislation, gave some hint of the differences between McConnell and the man he will replace. Frist—a tall, immaculately coiffed, square-jawed Tennessee surgeon—seemed almost to glow as he preened before the cameras. Behind him and a little to the side, his deputy stood staring impassively into space. With his pale complexion and gray, shapeless suit, McConnell appeared to exist in black and white. When it was his turn at the microphone, he used a dry, deliberate, and slightly monotonous speaking style to praise a colleague for his work on the bill, then quickly stepped aside.

He may not look as good as Frist, but many observers expect a more efficiently run Senate under McConnell. "I think you will not see Harry Reid run 'Roberts Rules of Order' circles around McConnell," says Chuck Todd, the editor of *National Journal*'s *Hotline*, and a veteran Washington political observer. Indeed, of the few legislative successes that Frist has achieved, two of them—bills making it harder to bring class-action lawsuits and to file for bankruptcy—occurred when McConnell played a leading role. And it's no accident that both were among the most eagerly sought items of the party's corporate backers.

McConnell will also likely do more than Frist to help Republicans maintain control of the Senate. Some observers say they expect him to pressure certain of his colleagues with safer seats to share more of their campaign funds, with the goal of preserving or increasing the GOP majority. Already, McConnell has created a program that solicits money from top donors and sends it to candidates in the most critical races. In November 2004, it gave the maximum $10,000 to every Senate Republican incumbent facing an even remotely challenging race.

If Republicans do hold onto the Senate—and they might not—McConnell will likely have a smaller majority than Frist has enjoyed. A leader hoping to get legislation passed would probably respond by being more conciliatory toward the minority—but Republicans didn't pick McConnell because of his talent for conciliation. "I think he'll be more likely to pick a fight," says the Heritage Foundation's Darling. With a confrontational Republican leader, a narrow Senate majority, and an unpopular, lame duck president, the next two years don't figure to see much landmark legislation passed. Instead, if the past is any guide, Majority Leader McConnell will focus only on measures that support Republican power or drive a wedge between Democrats, and will do everything possible to keep campaign dollars flowing to the GOP. But if and when that happens, don't blame McConnell. He'll only be doing what he was elected to do.

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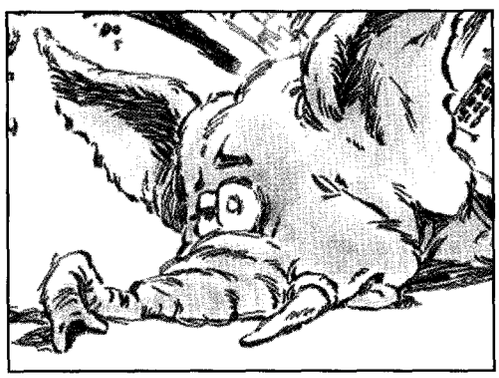
Time for us to go



With Republicans controlling Congress and the White House, conservatives these days ought to be happy, but most aren't. They see expanding government, runaway spending, Middle East entanglements, and government corruption, and they wonder why, exactly, the country should be grateful for Republican dominance. Some accuse Bush and the Republicans today of not being true conservatives. Others see a grab bag of stated policies and wonder how they cohere. Everyone thinks *something's* got to change. Now seven prominent conservatives dare to speak the unspeakable: They hope the Republicans lose in 2006. Well, let's be diplomatic and say they'd prefer divided government—soon. (Perhaps that formulation will fool Dennis Hastert.) Of course, all of them wish for the long-term health of conservatism, and most are loyal to the GOP. What they also believe, however, is that even if a Speaker Pelosi looms in the wings, sometimes the best remedy for a party gone astray is to give it a session in the time-out chair.

Illustrations by Bruce Bollinger

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Let's quit while we're behind.

By Christopher Buckley

"The trouble with our times," Paul Valéry said, "is that the future is not what it used to be."

This glum *aperçu* has been much with me as we move into the home stretch of the 2006 mid-term elections and shimmy into the starting gates of the 2008 presidential campaign. With heavy heart, as a once-proud—indeed, staunch— Republican, I here admit, behind enemy lines, to the guilty hope that my party loses; on both occasions.

I voted for George W. Bush in 2000. In 2004, I could not bring myself to pull the same lever again. Neither could I bring myself to vote for John Kerry, who, for all his strengths, credentials, and talent, seems very much less than the sum of his parts. So, I wrote in a vote for George Herbert Walker Bush, for whom I worked as a speechwriter from 1981 to '83. I wish he'd won.

Bob Woodward asked Bush 43 if he had consulted his father before invading Iraq. The son replied that he had consulted "a higher father." That *frisson* you feel going up your spine is the realization that *he meant it*. And apparently the higher father said, "Go for it!" There are those of us who wish he had consulted his terrestrial one; or, if he couldn't get him on the line, Brent Scowcroft. Or Jim Baker. Or Henry Kissinger. Or, for that matter, anyone who has read a book about the British experience in Iraq. (18,000 dead.)

Anyone who has even a passing personal acquaintance of Bush 41 knows him to be, roughly speaking, the most decent, considerate, humble, and cautious man on the planet. Also, the most loving parent on earth. What a wrench it must be for him to pick up his paper every morning and read the now-daily debate about whether his son is officially the worst president in U.S. history. (That chuckling you hear is the ghost of James Buchanan.) To paraphrase another president, I feel 41's pain. Does 43 feel 41's? Does he, I wonder, feel *ours*?

There were some of us who scratched our heads in 2000 when we first heard the phrase "compassionate conservative." It had a cobbled-together, tautological, dare I say, Rovian aroma to it. But OK, we thought, let's give it a chance. It sounded more fun than Gore's "Prosperity for America's Families." (*Boring*.)

Six years later, the White House uses the phrase about as much as it does "Mission Accomplished." Six years of record deficits and profligate expansion of entitlement programs. Incompetent expansion, at that: The actual cost of the President's Medicare drug benefit turned out, within months of being enacted, to be roughly one-third more than the stated price. Weren't Republicans supposed to be the ones who were good at accounting? All those years on Wall Street calculating CEO compensation....

Who knew, in 2000, that "compassionate conservatism" meant bigger government, unrestricted government spending, government intrusion in personal matters, government ineptitude, and cronyism in disaster relief? Who knew, in 2000, that the only bill the president would veto, six years later, would be one on funding stem-cell research?

A more accurate term for Mr. Bush's political philosophy might be incontinent conservatism.

On Capitol Hill, a Republican Senate and House are now distinguished by—or perhaps even synonymous with—earmarks, the K Street Project, Randy Cunningham (bandit, 12 o'clock high!), Sen. Ted Stevens's $250-million Bridge to Nowhere, Jack Abramoff (Who? Never heard of him), and a Senate Majority Leader who declared, after conducting his own medical evaluation via videotape, that he knew every bit as much about the medical condition of Terry Schiavo as her own doctors and husband. Who knew that conservatism means barging into someone's hospital room like Dr. Frankenstein with defibrillator paddles? In what chapter of Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* or Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind* is that principle enunciated?

The Republican Party I grew up into—Dwight D. Eisenhower, William F. Buckley Jr., Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon (sigh), Ronald Reagan—stood for certain things. It did not always live up to its ideals. *Au contraire*, as we Republicans said in the pre-Dominique de Villepin era—often, it fell flat on its face. A self-proclaimed "conservative," Nixon kept the Great Society entitlement beast fat and happy and brought in wage and price controls. Reagan funked Social Security reform in 1983 and raised (lesser) taxes three times. He vowed to balance the budget, and drove the deficit to historic highs by failing to rein in government spending. Someone called it "Voodoo economics." You could Google it.

There were foreign misadventures, terrible ones: Vietnam (the '69-'75 chapters), Beirut, Iran-Contra, the Saddam

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Hussein tilt. But there were compensating triumphs: Eisenhower's refusal to bail out France in Indochina in 1954, Nixon's China opening, the Cold War victory.

Despite the failures, one had the sense that the party at least knew in its heart of hearts that these *were* failures, either of principle or execution. Today one has no sense, aside from a slight lowering of the swagger-mometer, that the president or the Republican Congress is in the least bit chastened by their debacles.

George Tenet's WMD "slam-dunk," Vice President Cheney's "we will be greeted as liberators," Don Rumsfeld's avidity to promulgate a minimalist military doctrine, together with the tidy theories of a group who call themselves "neo-conservative" (not one of whom, to my knowledge, has ever worn a military uniform), have thus far: de-stabilized the Middle East; alienated the world community from the United States; empowered North Korea, Iran, and Syria; unleashed sectarian carnage in Iraq among tribes who have been cutting each others' throats for over a thousand years; cost the lives of 2,600 Americans, and the limbs, eyes, organs, spinal cords of another 15,000—with no end in sight. But not to worry: Democracy is on the march in the Middle East. Just ask Hamas. And the neocons—bright people, all—are now clamoring, "On to Tehran!"

What have they done to my party? Where does one go to get it back?

One place comes to mind: the back benches. It's time for a time-out. Time to hand over this sorry enchilada to Hillary and Nancy Pelosi and Joe Biden and Charlie Rangel and Harry Reid, who has the gift of being able to induce sleep in 30 seconds. Or, with any luck, to Mark Warner or, what the heck, Al Gore. I'm not much into polar bears, but this heat wave has me thinking the man might be on to something.

My fellow Republicans, it is time, as Madison said in Federalist 76, to "Hand over the tiller of governance, that others may fuck things up for a change."

(Or was it Federalist 78?)

Christopher Buckley's new novel *Boomsday* will be published in April 2007 by Warner Twelve.

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Bring on Pelosi.

By Bruce Bartlett

As a conservative who's interested in the long-term health of both my country and the Republican Party, I have a suggestion for the GOP in 2006: lose. Handing over at least one house of Congress to the other side of the aisle for the next two years would probably be good for everyone. It will improve governance in the country, and it will increase the chances of GOP gains in 2008.

Having one-party control of both houses of Congress and the White House may allow national action to be taken more quickly, but it's contrary to the spirit of our system of government. The Founding Fathers explicitly rejected a parliamentary arrangement, in which the executive and legislative branches are united under the same party. Not only did they separate the legislative and executive functions; they further divided the legislative function into two bodies with different numbers, different terms of service, and different election methods. (Remember that prior to the 17th Amendment, senators were elected by state legislatures.) In short, divided government was baked in the cake by the Founding Fathers, who wanted lawmaking to be slow and difficult, not quick and easy. They reasoned, wisely, that laws able to overcome their institutional obstacle course were more likely to be clearly considered, broadly supported, and equipped to stand the test of time.

Ronald Reagan had to contend with a Democrat-controlled House of Representatives for all eight years of his presidency. This was no barrier to genuinely popular legislation, such as the 1981 tax cut. The White House simply had to work harder and make better arguments for its program. And Democratic control of the House helped make the 1986 Tax Reform Act one of the few major tax bills in history to which both Republicans and Democrats still point with pride. Similarly, Bill Clinton faced divided government for six of his eight years, and those years gave us the 1996 welfare-reform bill, which continues to have broad support.

These laws endured because they had legitimacy. It's unlikely that either party would single-handedly have produced anything as good. Indeed, one-party government encourages the majority to pass legislation using votes only from its own side and usually leads it to bargain first with those on its own extremes (those least willing to compromise on anything) instead of moderates across the aisle. This almost guarantees that controversial lawmaking will be the norm.

Divided government has other advantages, too. For one, it restrains government spending. The budget surpluses of the late 1990s resulted mainly from Bill Clinton's unwillingness to support the Republican Congress's priorities and its unwillingness to support his. For another, it improves our foreign policy. We had divided government during 36 of 55 years between 1947 and 2001, which meant that both parties had to take responsibility for the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq (the first one). America is much more effective in the international arena when it has a high degree of bipartisanship in its foreign policy. In the not-too-distant past, Republicans including Arthur Vandenberg and Democrats including Daniel Patrick Moynihan understood this. With the current war in Iraq, however, Democrats who support the war are forced to oppose it, and Republicans who oppose the war are forced to support it. This makes other countries unsure of our resolve and commitments.

Those who worry that divided government would compromise our efforts in Iraq shouldn't be overly concerned. As the minority party, Democrats today are free to criticize our efforts in Iraq without having to offer constructive alternatives. But put them in the majority, and they'll suddenly have to put up or shut up. Let them defund the war and implement an immediate pullout if that's what they really think we should do. At least it would force the administration to explain itself better and face some oversight, for which the Republican Congress has essentially abrogated all responsibility. Polls will quickly indicate which side has made the better case.

Finally, on a purely partisan level, I believe that loss of one or both houses will strengthen the Republican Party going into 2008. It will force a debate on issues that have been swept under the rug, such out-of-control government spending and the coziness between Republicans and K Street, home of Washington's lobbying community. Afterwards, the party will emerge stronger, with better arguments for keeping control of the White House. Also, Democrats may well be placed under so much pressure from their left-wing fringe that they'll be forced into politically self-destructive acts such as trying to impeach President Bush. Every Republican I know thinks Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid are the best things they have going for them. Giving these inept leaders higher profiles would be a gift to conservatives everywhere.

Bruce Bartlett is the author of *Impostor: How George W. Bush Bankrupted America and Betrayed the Reagan Legacy*, recently published by Doubleday.

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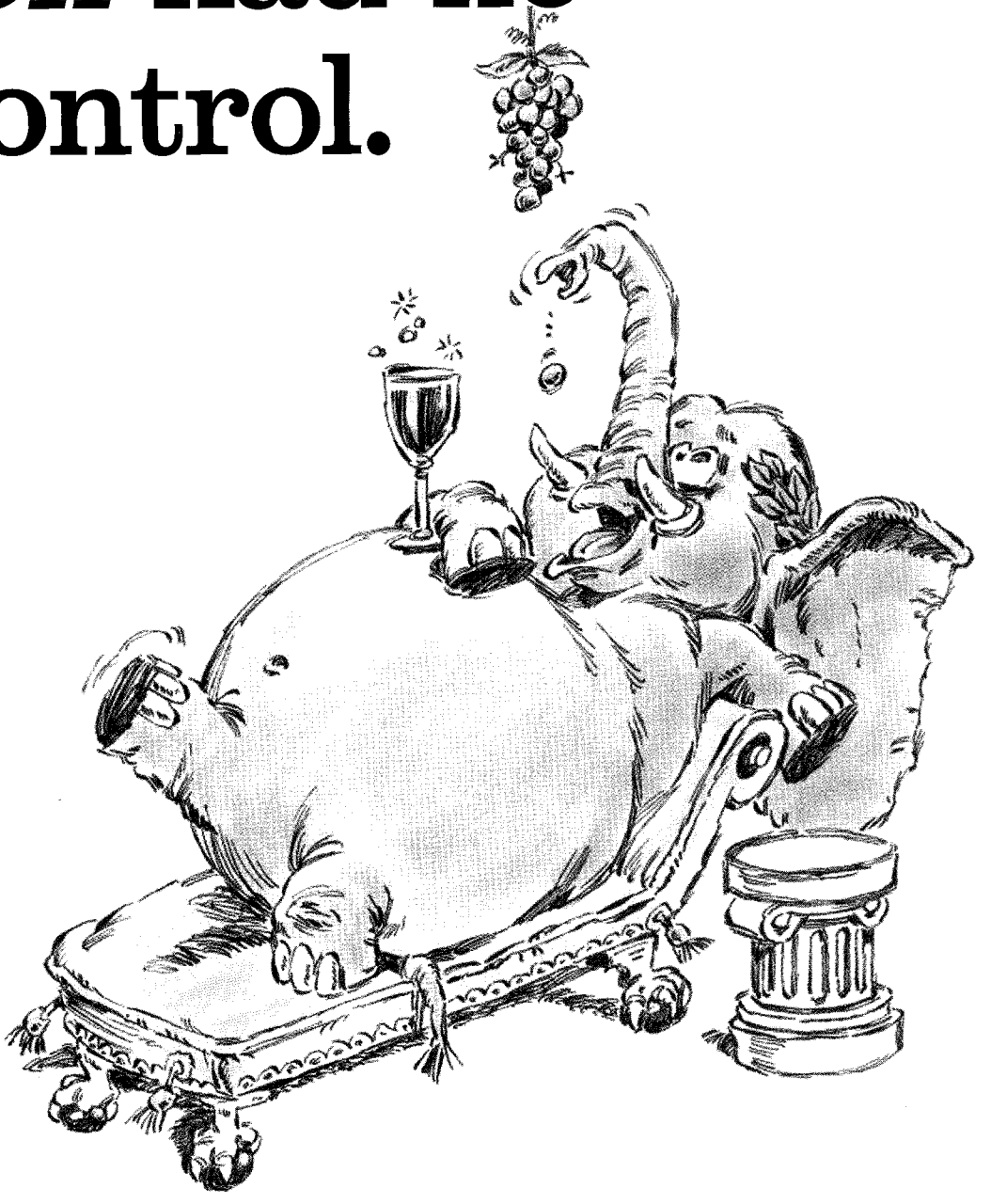
And we thought *Clinton* had no self-control.

By Joe Scarborough



When *The Washington Monthly* reached me at my office recently, a voice on the other side of the line meekly asked if I would ever consider writing an article supporting the radical proposition that Republicans should get their brains beaten in this fall.

"Count me in!" was my chipper response. I also seem to remember muttering something about preferring an assortment of Bourbon Street hookers running the Southern Baptist Convention to having this lot of Republicans controlling America's checkbook for the next two years.

Maybe that's because right-wing, knuckle-dragging Republicans like myself took over Congress in 1994 promising to balance the budget and limit Washington's power. We were a nasty breed and had no problem blaming Bill and Hillary Clinton for everything from the exploding federal deficit to male pattern baldness. I suspected then, as I do now, that Hillary Clinton herself had something to do with "Love, American Style" and "Joanie Loves Chachi." And why not blame her? Back then, Newt Gingrich felt comfortable blaming the drowning of two little children on Democratic values. Hell. It was 1994. It just seemed like the thing to do.

The terminally rumpled Dick Armey (R-Whiskey Gulch) even went so far as to suggest that the Clintons might be Marxists, drawing an angry personal rebuke from Bubba himself. But 12 years later, it is Armey's fellow Republicans who should be sobered by the short and ugly history of Republican Supremacy.

Under Bill Clinton's presidency, discretionary spending grew at a modest rate of 3.4 percent. Not too bad for a Marxist, even considering that his worst instincts were tempered by a Republican Congress. (Well, his worst *fiscal* instincts.)

But compare Clinton's 3.4 percent growth rate to the spending orgy that has dominated Washington since Bush

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moved into town. With Republicans in charge of both sides of Pennsylvania Avenue, spending growth has averaged 10.4 percent per year. And the GOP's reckless record goes well beyond runaway defense costs. The federal education bureaucracy has exploded by 101 percent since Republicans started running Congress. Spending in the Justice Department over the same period has shot up 131 percent, the Commerce Department 82 percent, the Department of Health and Human Services 81 percent, the State Department 80 percent, the Department of Transportation 65 percent, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development 59 percent. Incredibly, the four bureaucracies once targeted for elimination by the GOP Congress—Commerce, Energy, Education, and Housing and Urban Development—have enjoyed spending increases of an average of 85 percent.

It's enough to make economic conservatives long for the day when Marxists were running the White House.

This must all be shocking to my Republican friends who still believe our country would be a better place if our party controlled every branch of government as well as every news network, movie studio, and mid-American pulpit. But evidence suggests that divided government may be what Washington needs the most.

During the 1990s, conservative Republicans and the Clinton White House somehow managed to balance the budget while winning two wars, reforming welfare, and conducting an awesome impeachment trial focused on oral sex and a stained Gap dress.

The fact that both parties hated each another was healthy for our republic's bottom line. A Democratic president who hates a Republican appropriations chairman is less likely to sign off on funding for the Midland Maggot Festival being held in the chairman's home district. Soon, budget negotiations become nasty, brutish, and short and devolve into the legislative equivalent of Detroit, where only the strong survive.

But in Bush's Washington, the capital is a much clubbier place where everyone in the White House knows someone on the Hill who worked with the Old Man, summered in Maine, or pledged DKE at Yale. The result? Chummy relationships, no vetoes, and record-breaking debts.

As a political junkie who wept bitter tears the night Jimmy Carter got elected and shouted with uncontrolled joy when Ronald Reagan whipped his sorry ass four years later, I find myself ambivalent for the first time over a national election. After six years of Republican recklessness at home and abroad, I seriously doubt Nancy Pelosi or Harry Reid or the aforementioned Bourbon Street hookers could spend this country any deeper into debt than my Republican Party. With any luck, Democrats will launch destructive investigations, a new era of bad feelings will break out, and George W. Bush will stop using his veto pen to fill in Rangers' box scores and instead start using it like a conservative president should.

Joe Scarborough, host of MSNBC's "Scarborough Country" and member of the House of Representatives from 1995 to 2001, is the author of *Rome Wasn't Burnt in a Day* (HarperCollins).

Give divided government a chance.

By William A. Niskanen

For those of you with a partisan bent, I have some bad news. Our federal government may work better (well, less badly) when at least one house of Congress is controlled by the opposing party. Divided government is, curiously, less divisive. It's also cheaper. The basic reason for this is simple: When one party proposes drastic or foolish measures, the other party can obstruct them. The United States prospers most when excesses are curbed, and, if the numbers from the past 50 years are any indication, divided government is what curbs them.

Let's look at some statistics. From the dawn of the Cold War until today, we've had only two periods of what could be called fiscal restraint: The last six years of the Eisenhower administration, and the last six years of the Clinton administration, both intervals in which the opposition controlled Congress. Under Clinton, the average annual increase in spending was at about

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Annual Percent Changes in Real Per Capita Federal Expenditures

Key to chart:

"Unified government": when the White House and both houses of Congress are controlled by the same party

"Divided government": when the White House and one or both houses of Congress are controlled by different parties

Years	Unified Gov.	Divided Gov.
1949-1954	9.79	
1955-1960		-0.40
1961-1968	5.39	
1969-1976		2.63
1977-1980	2.74	
1981-1992		2.65
1993-1994	-0.47	
1995-2002		1.03
2003-2005	3.05	
Average	**5.26**	**1.73**

one percent, while, under Ike, it was negative. By contrast, our unified governments have gone on fiscal benders. Harry Truman, with the help of a Democratic Congress, sent the money flying, with spending increases of as high as 10 percent a year. Lyndon Johnson was almost as profligate. And today, unfortunately, George W. Bush, with a GOP majority, is the heir to their legacies. To put this in plain numbers, government spending has increased an average of only 1.73 percent annually during periods of divided government. This number more than triples, to 5.26 percent, for periods of unified government. (See accompanying table.) That's a hefty premium to pay for a bit of unity.

Equally striking is that these spending increases have generally found the same recipient: the Pentagon. It's not that unified governments love to purchase bombers, but, rather, that they tend to draw us into war. This may sound improbable at first, but consider this: In 200 years of U.S. history, every one of our conflicts involving more than a week of ground combat has been initiated by a unified government. Each of the four major American wars during the 20th century, for example—World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War—was initiated by a Democratic president with the support of a Democratic Congress. The current war in Iraq, initiated by a Republican president and backed by a Republican Congress, is consistent with this pattern. It also stands as the only use of military force involving more than a week of ground combat that has been initiated by a Republican president in over a century. Divided government appears to be an important constraint on American participation in war. Needless to say, this reduces outlays in both blood and treasure.

There's one more advantage to tension between our governmental branches: Major reform is more likely to last. Since passing any measure in divided government requires bipartisan support, a shift in majorities is less likely to bring on serious changes or adulterations. The Reagan tax laws of 1981 and 1986, for example, were both approved by a House of Representatives controlled by Democrats and have largely survived. The welfare reform of 1996 was approved by Clinton and a Republican Congress and also endures. By contrast, any efforts during the past several years to reform the federal tax code, Medicare, or Social Security have faltered, and any changes forced through by the GOP would almost certainly be undone as soon as Democrats returned to power. Reforms of real magnitude will almost certainly depend on preventing immoderation and securing bipartisan support, and little of that seems likely in a GOP-only government.

American voters, in their unarticulated collective wisdom, seem to grasp the benefits of divided government, and that's how they've voted for most of the past 50 years. To be sure, divided government is not the stuff of which political legends are made, but, in real life, most of us would take good legislation over good legends. As a life-long Republican and occasional federal official, I must acknowledge a hard truth: I don't much care how a divided government is next realized. And, in 2006, there's only one way that's going to happen.

William A. Niskanen is chairman of the Cato Institute and was a former member and acting chairman of President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers.

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Restrain this White House.

By Bruce Fein

Suppose Democrats capture control of one or both chambers of Congress in November. A conservative would instinctively cringe. On the domestic front, Democrats still don't get Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, which teaches the superiority of free markets to government-regulated markets euphemistically styled "industrialization policy" or otherwise. Smith lacerated the economic philosophy of modern Democrats: "The statesman who should attempt to direct private people in what manner they ought to employ their capitals would not only load himself with a most unnecessary attention, but assume an authority which could safely be trusted, not only to no single person, but to no council or senate whatever, and which would nowhere be so dangerous as in the hands of a man who had folly and presumption enough to fancy himself fit to exercise it." With Democrats controlling Congress, we could expect command-and-control laws requiring windmills on every farm, photovoltaic cells in every home, and hydrogen fuel in every car.

In foreign affairs, Democrats are stalled in the horse latitudes. They have no philosophical starting point. They sport no strategy for confronting the nuclear ambitions of Iran or North Korea, the quagmires in Iraq and Afghanistan, or the growing friction between Japan on the one hand and China and South Korea on the other. Beating swords into plowshares and making war no more is not a strategy but utopian faith.

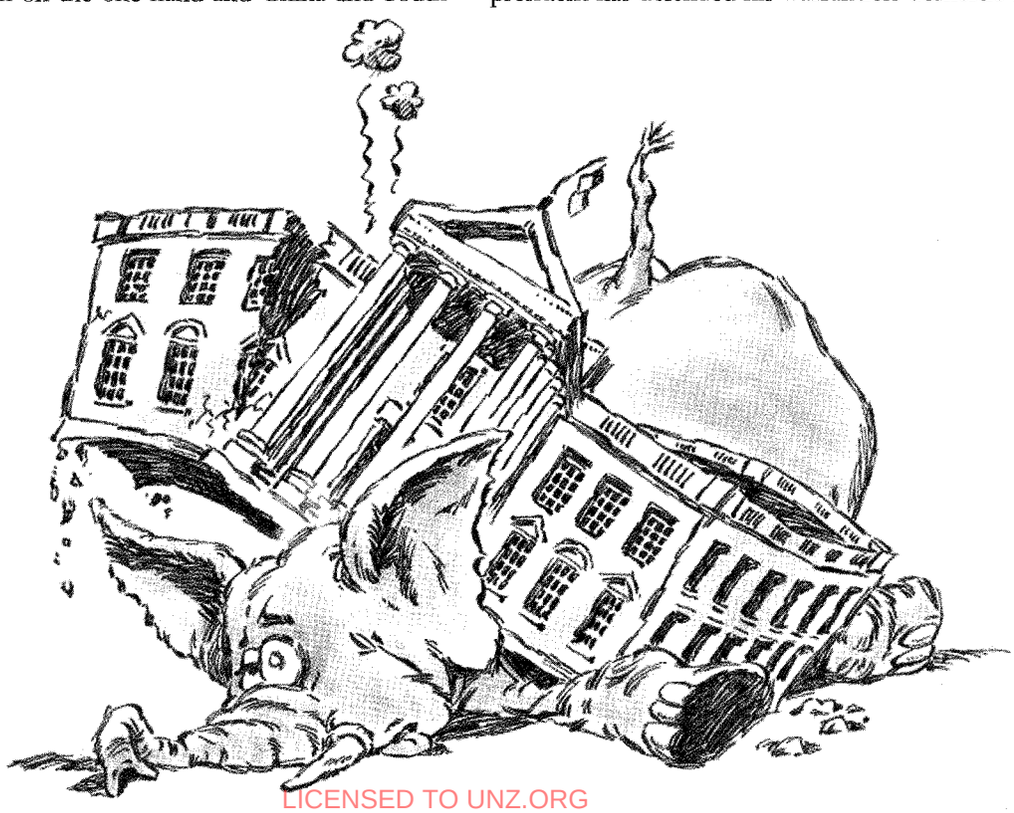
So conservatives should weep if Democrats prevail in the House or Senate.

But perhaps not.

The most conservative principle of the Founding Fathers was distrust of unchecked power. Centuries of experience substantiated that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Men are not angels. Ambition must be made to counteract ambition to avert abuses or tyranny. The Constitution embraced a separation of powers to keep the legislative, executive, and judicial branches in equilibrium. As Edward Gibbon wrote in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*: "The principles of a free constitution are irrevocably lost, when the legislative power is nominated by the executive."

But a Republican Congress has done nothing to thwart President George W. Bush's alarming usurpations of legislative prerogatives. Instead, it has largely functioned as an echo chamber of the White House.

President Bush has flouted the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA) for five years by directing the National Security Agency to target American citizens on American soil for electronic surveillance on his say-so alone. The president has defended his warrantless domestic spying with an



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imperial theory of inherent constitutional power that would empower him to open mail, break in and enter homes, or torture detainees, even in violation of federal criminal statutes. He has concealed details of the spying program indispensable to rational congressional oversight—for example, the number of Americans targeted, the earmarks employed to select the targets, or the intelligence yield of the spying. He has never explained to Congress why FISA could not have been amended to accommodate any unforeseen evasive tactics by al Qaeda in lieu of simply disregarding the law. Indeed, Congress has amended FISA six times since 9/11 at the request of the White House, and the Senate Intelligence Committee was informed by Bush's Justice Department on July 31, 2002, that FISA was working impeccably. The president has also refused to disclose what legal advice he received to justify the NSA's warrantless domestic spying at its inception. And Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez has confessed that President Bush is operating other intelligence collection programs that are unknown to Congress and the public and that will never be revealed, absent leaks to the media.

Republicans in Congress have bowed to the president's scorn for the rule of law and craving for secret government. They have voted against Democratic Sen. Russell Feingold's resolution to rebuke Bush for violating federal statutes and crippling checks and balances. They have resisted brandishing either the power of the purse or the contempt power (with which it can compel testimony) to end the president's violation of FISA and to force full disclosure of his secret foreign-intelligence programs. Indeed, the Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Arlen Specter, is sponsoring a bill that in substance endorses President Bush's FISA illegalities and authorizes an electronic-surveillance program warrant that would enable the NSA to spy on Americans indiscriminately without the particularized suspicion of wrongdoing required by the Fourth Amendment.

Republicans in the House and Senate have been equally invertebrate in the face of presidential signing statements that usurp the power to legislate. In approximately 800 cases, President Bush has both signed a bill and declared his intent to disregard provisions he believes are unconstitutional, the equivalent of a line-item veto. For instance, he signed the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005 prohibiting torture while issuing a signing statement declaring his intent to ignore the law in order to gather military or foreign intelligence.

The Presentment Clause of Article I, Section 7 gives the president but two options when presented with a bill passed by Congress: sign or veto the bill in its entirety. That was the holding of the Supreme Court when it found a line-item veto statute unconstitutional in 1998's *Clinton v. City of New York*. The president is obligated to veto a bill that he believes to be unconstitutional; Congress may override that judgment by two-thirds majorities. In the 217-year history of the United States under the present Constitution, Congress has overridden only 28 constitutionally based vetoes, and on only one occasion did the override engender a constitutional battle between the president and Congress. Presidential signing statements further usurp the legislative power by resulting in the enforcement of laws that Congress has not passed. Members vote on all the provisions of a law collectively in the expectation that all will be executed if the president approves.

Signing statements also flout the president's obligation in Article II of the Constitution to execute the laws faithfully. The Founding Fathers were acutely aware of the example of King James II, whose practice of suspending or dispensing with laws he believed encroached on royal prerogatives eventually occasioned his overthrow in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. With such precedents in mind, the framers of the United States Constitution directed the president to execute the laws without fail. The Republican Congress, however, has acted as a disinterested spectator while President Bush has stolen its legislative authority in plain view and exercised the tyrannical power of making, executing, and conclusively interpreting the law and the Constitution.

The most frightening claim made by Bush with congressional acquiescence is reminiscent of the *lettres de cachet* of prerevolutionary France. (Such letters, with which the king could order the arrest and imprisonment of subjects without trial, helped trigger the storming of the Bastille.) In the aftermath of 9/11, Mr. Bush maintained that he could pluck any American citizen out of his home or off of the sidewalk and detain him indefinitely on the president's finding that he was an illegal combatant. No court could second-guess the president. Bush soon employed such monarchial power to detain a few citizens and to frighten would-be dissenters, and Republicans in Congress either cheered or fiddled like Nero while the Constitution burned. The Supreme Court ultimately entered the breach and repudiated the president in 2004's *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*. Republicans similarly yawned as President Bush ordained military tribunals to try accused war criminals based on secret evidence and unreliable hearsay in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the Geneva Convention. The Supreme Court again was forced to countervail the congressional dereliction by holding the tribunals illegal in 2006's *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*.

Republicans have shied from challenging Bush by placing party loyalty above institutional loyalty, contrary to the expectations of the Founding Fathers. They do so in the fear that embarrassing or discrediting a Republican president might reverberate to their political disadvantage in a reverse coat-tail effect.

Democrats, for their part, likewise place party above the Constitution, but their party loyalty at least creates an incentive to frustrate Bush's super-imperial presidency. This could help to restore checks and balances. For the foreseeable future, divided government is the best bet for preserving both the letter and spirit of the Constitution. If Democrats capture the House or Senate in November 2006, the danger created by Bush with a Republican-controlled Congress would be mitigated or eliminated.

But that only applies to the next two years. If Hillary Clinton wins the White House in 2008, conservatives should be equally zealous for Republicans to recapture Congress.

Bruce Fein is a constitutional and international lawyer with Bruce Fein & Associates and The Lichfield Group. He served as associate deputy attorney general under President Ronald Reagan and was a member of the ABA Task Force on presidential signing statements.

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Idéologie has taken over.

By Jeffrey Hart

With 9/11, George W. Bush was reborn (again). Until then, his presidency had been undistinguished and his poll numbers low. He had also made one particularly ominous decision. In August 2001, using an executive order, Bush blocked federal support for stem-cell research. In substance that was bad enough—like many people I oppose disease and early death—but equally disturbing was the mindset. Bush summed it up in 2004, when he described stem-cell research as a project "to destroy life to save life."

Wait a minute. Here Bush was using the same word, "life," to describe not only a minute clump of cells known as a blastocyst but also an actual human being. In this flagrant disconnect between words and actuality were the early indications of a profoundly ideological mindset.

Edmund Burke was the original enemy of ideology. In the slogans of the French *philosophes*, Burke saw something new and alarming in politics, and he struggled for language to describe it, writing of "abstract theory" and "metaphysical dogma." Burke was seeking a way to describe a belief system impervious to fact or experience, and he brought to bear a permanent-

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ly valid analysis of human behavior and the role of social institutions. William F. Buckley once summed up Burke's outlook when he called conservatism the "politics of reality."

But that was then. Today, the standard-bearer of "conservatism" in the United States is George W. Bush, a man who has taken the positions of an unshakable ideologue: on supply-side economics, on privatization, on Social Security, on the Terri Schiavo case, and, most disastrously, on Iraq. Never before has a United States president consistently adhered to beliefs so disconnected from actuality.

Bush's party has followed him on this course. It has approved Bush's prescription-drug plan, an incomprehensible and ruinously expensive piece of legislation. It has steadfastly backed the war in Iraq, even though the notion of nation-building was once anathema to the GOP. And it has helped run up federal indebtedness to unprecedented heights, leaving China to finance the debt.

Perhaps most damaging to the ideal of conservatism has been the influence of religious ideology. During the fight over whether to remove the feeding tube of Terri Schiavo, a Florida woman who had been in a vegetal state for 15 years, politicians began to say strange and feverish things. "She talks and she laughs, and she expresses happiness and discomfort," Majority whip Tom DeLay said of a woman for whom cognition of any kind was impossible. (Oxygen deprivation had liquefied her cerebral cortex.) Senate Majority leader Bill Frist examined Schiavo on videotape and deemed her "clearly responsive." As Schiavo's case fought its way through the courts, Republicans savaged judges for consistently sanctioning the removal of Schiavo's feeding tube. "The time will come for the men responsible for this to answer for their behavior," threatened DeLay.

That members of the judiciary were being chastised for responding to the law as written rather than looking, presumably, to some sort of divine guidance was hardly surprising. In 2002, Bush himself had said, "We need commonsense judges who understand that our rights were derived from God." In this chilling use of the word "God," the president made his views on the rule of law all too clear. The conservative writer Andrew Sullivan has aptly coined the term "Christianism" to refer to this merger of religiosity and politics.

As Bush's ideology leads from one disaster to another, one might ask: How far can it go? It has already brought us to Baghdad, an adventure so hopeless that Buckley recently mused, "If you had a European prime minister who experienced what we've experienced, it would be expected that he would retire or resign." The more we learn about what happened behind the scenes in the months leading up to the war in Iraq, the more apparent it becomes that evidence was twisted to fit preconceived notions. Those who produced evidence undermining the case for war were ignored or even punished. It was zealotry at its most calamitous.

On the subject of democratizing Iraq and the Middle East, Bush has voiced some of the most extraordinarily ideological statements ever made by a sitting president. "Human cultures can be vastly different," Bush told an audience at the American Enterprise Institute in February 2003, shortly before the invasion of Iraq. "Yet the human heart desires the same good things, everywhere on earth...For these fundamental reasons, freedom and democracy will always and everywhere have greater appeal than the slogans of hatred and the tactics of terror."

Happy thoughts, breathtakingly false. If this amounts to a worldview, it's certainly not that of Burke. Indeed, Bush would probably be more at home among the revolutionary French, provided his taxes remained low, than among Burke's Rockingham Whigs. (Burke would of course deny Bush admission to the Whigs in the first place, as Bush would be seen as an ideological comrade of the *philosophes* — if a singularly unreflective one.) It's no surprise that longtime conservatives such as Francis Fukuyama, George F. Will, and William F. Buckley have all distanced themselves from Bush's brand of adventurism.

The United States has seen political swings and produced its share of extremists, but its political character, whether liberals or conservatives have been in charge, has always remained fundamentally Burkean. The Constitution itself is a Burkean document, one that slows down decisions to allow for "deliberate sense" and checks and balances. President Bush has nearly upended that tradition, abandoning traditional realism in favor of a warped and incoherent brand of idealism. (No wonder Bush supporter Fred Barnes has praised him as a radical.) At this dangerous point in history, we must depend on the decisions of an astonishingly feckless chief executive: an empty vessel filled with equal parts Rove and Rousseau.

Successful government by either Democrats or Republicans has always been, above all, realistic. FDR, Eisenhower, and Reagan were all reelected by landslides and rank as great presidents who responded to the world as it is, not the world as they would have it. But ideological government deserves rejection, whatever its party affiliation. This November, the Republicans stand to face a tsunami of rejection. They've earned it.

Meanwhile, as we wait out our time with this president, we can look forward to the latest in a stream of rhetoric that increasingly makes Woodrow Wilson look like Machiavelli. "One, I believe there's an Almighty," Bush declared this April, "and secondly I believe one of the great gifts of the Almighty is the desire in everybody's soul, regardless of what you look like or where you live to be free. I believe liberty is universal."

Well, it is certainly taking a long time for the plans of the Almighty to show results in the actual world. As I write this, sectarian violence in Iraq is escalating. I'd call my skepticism "conservative," but Bushism has poisoned the very word.

Jeffrey Hart, professor of English emeritus at Dartmouth College and senior editor at *National Review*, was a speechwriter for Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. He is the author, most recently, of *The Making of the American Conservative Mind:* National Review *and Its Times*.

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The show must not go on.

By Richard A. Viguerie

With their record over the past few years, the Big Government Republicans in Washington do not merit the support of conservatives. They have busted the federal budget for generations to come with the prescription-drug benefit and the creation and expansion of other programs. They have brought forth a limitless flow of pork for the sole, immoral purpose of holding onto office. They have expanded government regulation into every aspect of our lives and refused to deal seriously with mounting domestic problems such as illegal immigration. They have spent more time seeking the favors of K Street lobbyists than listening to the conservatives who brought them to power. And they have sunk us into the very sort of nation-building war that candidate George W. Bush promised to avoid, while ignoring rising threats such as communist China and the oil-rich "new Castro," Hugo Chavez.

Conservatives are as angry as I have seen them in my nearly five decades in politics. Right now, I would guess that 40 percent of conservatives are ambivalent about the November election or want the Republicans to lose. But a Republican loss of one or both houses of Congress would turn power over to the likes of Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid. Dare we risk such an outcome?

The answer is, we must take that chance. If Big Government Republicans behave so irresponsibly and betray the people who elected them, while we blindly, slavishly continue backing them, we establish that there is no price to pay for violating conservative principles. If we give in, we are forgetting the lesson that mothers teach their daughters: Why buy a cow when the milk is free?

And it may take a Republican defeat to bring about a complete change in the GOP leadership in Washington. Without such a change, real conservatives will never come to power. We are like the Jews who wandered the desert for 40 years until their old, corrupt leaders passed away; we will never reach the Promised Land with these guys in charge.

Yes, on the morning after the 2006 election, if liberal Democrats have won big, it will sting. Many in the media and in the GOP establishment will lay the blame on us for the Republican defeat. The party line will be that Republicans would have done better if they had been less conservative.

But the last 42 years have taught conservatives a simple lesson: If defeat comes because you stand firm for what you believe, and if you learn lessons that will help you win in the future, a defeat can hold the seeds of a hundred victories.

In 1964, conservatives created a national campaign for a somewhat reluctant Barry Goldwater, pushed his nomination through the Republican Convention—and suffered a disastrous defeat at the polls. Defeat came at the end of a campaign in which the media, at every opportunity, seconded liberals' charges that conservatives were bigots, neo-Nazis, and reckless crazies who, given political power, might destroy the world in a nuclear holocaust.

We were as thoroughly defeated as anyone can be in American politics. Remember that, following a 49-state defeat for the Democratic presidential candidate in 1972, Democrats still controlled both houses of Congress, and that, following another 49-state landslide defeat in 1984, they still controlled the House of Representatives. In 1965, conservatives had nothing—not even control of the Republican Party, whose establishment assigned us the full blame for the loss.

But we had planted the seeds.

Logistically, an estimated four million men and women had taken an active part in the Goldwater campaign. This was unprecedented in modern American politics. LBJ had only half as many workers, even though the Democratic voter pool was 50 percent larger.

In fundraising, the difference was even greater. The Goldwater campaign was the first popularly financed campaign in modern American history. The 1960 campaign, with between 40,000 and 50,000 individual contributors to Nixon and some 22,000 to Kennedy, was typical of the approach from previous years. Estimates of the number of contributors to Goldwater in 1964, combining federal, state, and local campaign groups, range from 650,000 to over a million. As you'd surmise from such an explosion in the number of contributors, individual and smaller contributors became hugely important. Only 28 percent of the Goldwater federal campaign contributions were for $500 or more, compared to 69 percent of the Democratic contributions.

We were learning how to mobilize grassroots Americans for door-to-door campaigning as well as raising money.

Meanwhile, we were learning how to get around the establishment media. We created our own channels of communication, using publications like *National Review* and *Human Events*, Goldwater's book *The Conscience of a Conservative*, and underground bestsellers like Phyllis Schlafly's *A Choice, Not an Echo*,

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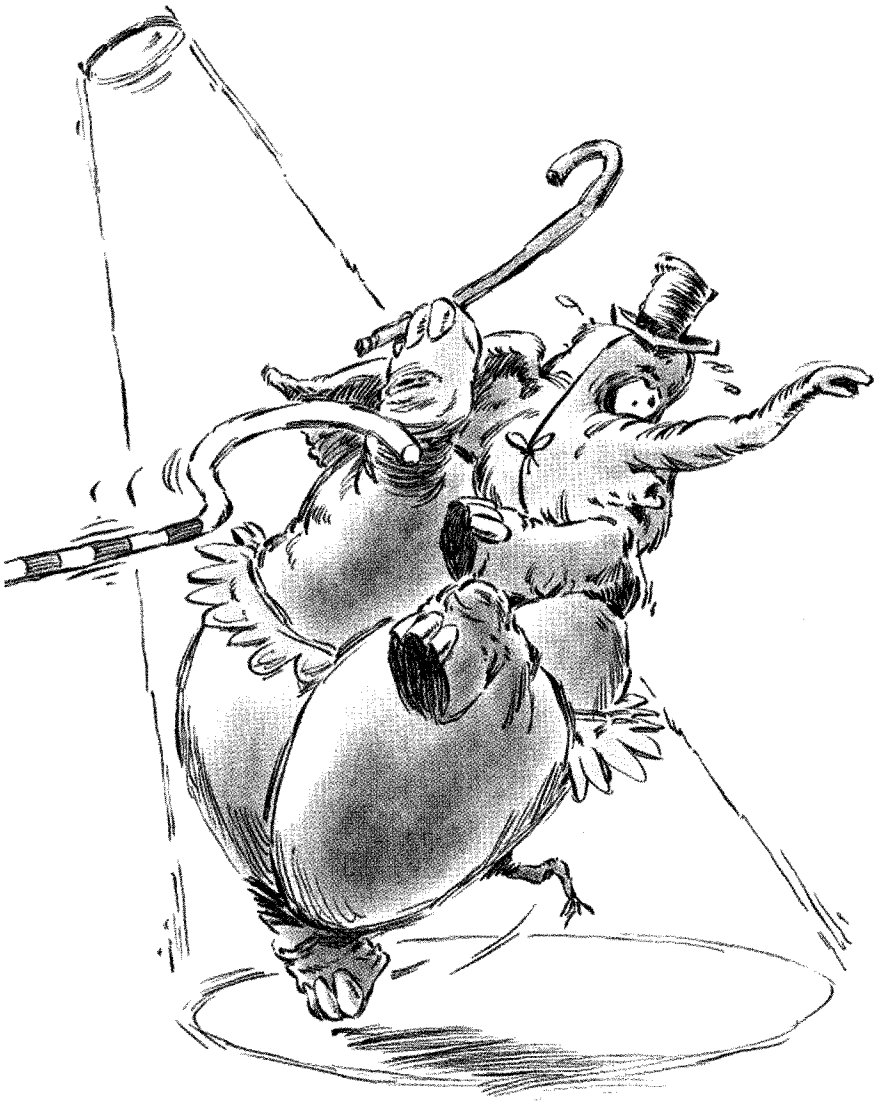

John Stormer's *None Dare Call It Treason*, and J. Evetts Haley's *A Texan Looks at Lyndon*. Those books sold millions of copies without the benefit of a major publisher or reviews in major publications.

A *New York Times* article of the day expressed amazement that anyone would pay attention to these books distributed by mail-order straight from the authors' kitchens. What the *Times* failed to appreciate was the beginning of a communications revolution, of new and alternative media that allowed conservatives to fly under the radar of the so-called mainstream media. That revolution led to billions of political direct-mail messages from my company alone, and eventually to conservatives' use of talk radio, cable news, and the Internet.

Another beneficial effect of the 1964 defeat was that it cleared a lot of dead wood out of the Republican Party. That made it easier for us to increase our influence on the GOP, utilizing new technology, more effective techniques, and fresh ideas. The Watergate scandal in 1974 eliminated more of the Republican officeholders who had stood in the way of creating a more broad-based party.

Defeat stings, but conservatives should keep this in mind: Without the disastrous congressional election of 1974, which dramatically weakened the party establishment, Ronald Reagan would never have been able to mount a nearly-successful challenge, two years later, to an incumbent president of his own party.

Defeat stings, but if Ford had beaten Jimmy Carter, it is highly unlikely that we would have elected some 35 conservatives to the House as part of the "Newt Gingrich class," or that we would have beaten five powerful liberal Democratic senators with conservatives in 1980.

Without a President Carter, it is unlikely that Reagan would have been elected in 1980, or ever. The conservatives-can't-win stigma, which largely disappeared with Reagan's 1980 and 1984 landslides, would have continued indefinitely. Without Reagan's policies, we would probably not have experienced the technological revolution of the past 20 years. But it's possible that none of that would have mattered, because without Reagan's policies, the Soviet Union and the Soviet Empire probably would have remained in place, even as internal pressures pushed the USSR toward war using its full arsenal of nuclear and biological weapons.

Defeat stings, but the election of Bill Clinton in 1992 led directly to the Republican takeover two years later. (Some conservatives foresaw this. One of my associates, at an election night party in 1992, celebrated Clinton's victory by chanting, as a prediction for 1994, "Speaker Gingrich! Speaker Gingrich!") Had the hapless President George H.W. Bush been reelected, it is a near certainty that the Democrats would have retained control of Congress in 1994. In fact, they would probably have gained congressional seats in 1994, then picked up the White House as well in 1996. Someone like Al Gore might have been in the White House on 9/11.

Sometimes a loss for the Republican Party is a gain for conservatives. Often, a little taste of liberal Democrats in power is enough to remind the voters what they don't like about liberal Democrats and to focus the minds of Republicans on the principles that really matter. That's why the conservative movement has grown fastest during those periods when things seemed darkest, such as during the Carter administration and the first two years of the Clinton White House.

Conservatives are, by nature, insurgents, and it's hard to maintain an insurgency when your friends, or people you thought were your friends, are in power. A Republican loss this year could lead to a rebirth of the conservative movement, as a Third Force independent of any political party.

If Democrats win in November, it will seem like a dark time. But the darkest time comes before the dawn.

Richard A. Viguerie, president of ConservativeHQ.com: The Conservative Headquarters, is author of the new book, *Conservatives Betrayed: How George W. Bush and Other Big Government Republicans Hijacked the Conservative Cause*. His e-mail address is rav@conservativesbetrayed.com.

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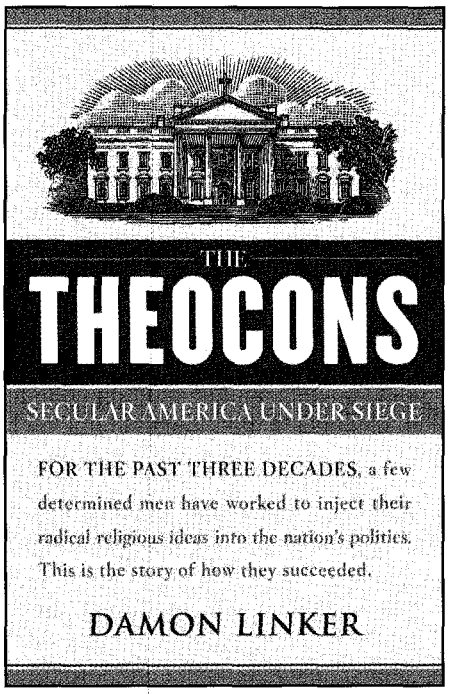
Unto the Father

Fr. Richard Neuhaus may have midwifed the religious right—but that doesn't mean Karl Rove always returns his phone calls.



The Theocons
By Damon Linker
Doubleday, $26

By Paul Baumann

Named by *Time* in 2005 as one of the nation's 25 most influential evangelical leaders, a thinker who has the ear of President George W. Bush on moral and cultural issues, Father Richard John Neuhaus remains little known in secular liberal circles. According to his former protégé, Damon Linker, that's a serious problem. In *The Theocons: Secular America Under Siege*, Linker portrays Neuhaus (a Lutheran pastor who converted to Catholicism in 1990) as the charismatic leader of an extremist movement bent on saving the nation from its headlong descent into decadent relativism by remoralizing politics and returning America to its Christian—perhaps even its unsuspected Catholic—roots.

That's exaggerated and alarmist, like much else in this tendentious book; yet Linker gets the basic political outlines right. If you are perplexed about why George Bush and so many other Republicans can't stop extolling "Almighty God" in public, you need to inform yourself about Neuhaus and his decades-long campaign to put religion back into the center of American politics. In his influential 1984 book, *The Naked Public Square*—Linker calls it the theocon "manifesto"—Neuhaus argued that the American "experiment in ordered liberty" is premised on religious assumptions about the freedom and dignity of the human person. In his view, freedom of religion is the first freedom, and the effort by liberal elites to strip the public square of religious language and advocacy is an assault on every American's freedom of conscience. According to Neuhaus, government, because it must inevitably order aspects of our common life that touch on our ultimate moral concerns, cannot turn a deaf ear to the religious aspirations of the governed. Nor, he argues, can the fundamental values of democracy be sustained outside of a larger religious context. Politically, Neuhaus is a master of dire prognostication. Divorced from its religious foundations, he warns, democracy is doomed.

From 2001 to 2005, Linker worked side by side with Neuhaus as an editor at the latter's monthly journal, *First Things*, and presumably shared his boss's enthusiasm for mixing prophetic religion and radical politics. But Linker seems now to have been born again as a strict secularist. Belatedly, he has come to the conclusion that nearly everything Neuhaus stands for is inimical to the freedoms Americans cherish. "Loyalty to the truth and devotion to the good of the nation," the author grandiloquently announces, have prompted this exposé, the inside story of a "cultural counterrevolution" that has commanded millions from right-wing foundations, won the allegiance of the conservative religious community, and gained the attention of popes, powerful evangelical ministers, presidential speechwriters, Supreme Court justices, and politicians alike. *The Theocons* offers a frequently damning, but unfortunately

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also frequently cartoonish, portrait of "a tightly knit group of ambitious and deeply conservative writers who set out over thirty years ago to devise a comprehensive political program that would reverse the secularizing direction of the country since the 1960s."

That group, as Linker describes it, comprises little more than a handful of major players. In addition to Neuhaus, they are: the American Enterprise Institute's Michael Novak, a contemporary of the 70-year-old Neuhaus who made a similar pilgrimage from the political left in the 1960s to the right wing of the Republican Party; Pope John Paul II's biographer George Weigel, long associated with Washington's Ethics and Public Policy Center; and two scholarly advocates of natural-law reasoning, Robert P. George of Princeton University and Hadley Arkes of Amherst College.

Novak and Weigel have no more than walk-on parts in *The Theocons*, while George and Arkes get even less ink. This is really a book about Neuhaus, and Linker makes little effort to widen the lens beyond the pages, Manhattan office, posh watering holes, and esoteric controversies of the *First Things* crowd. It seems unlikely that this puny cast of characters could place "secular America under siege." Nor is it likely that either Novak or Weigel see themselves as somehow secondary figures to Father Richard. At the very least, a serious study of contemporary conservative Catholic intellectuals would need to delve into Novak and Weigel's work in much more detail. In short, Linker is prone to exaggerate his former employer's influence.

Still, this chaste kiss-and-tell story should hold considerable fascination even for readers unfamiliar with the somewhat circumscribed world of religious opinion journalism, where Neuhaus is a prominent and polarizing figure. (Note: I once wrote a book review for *First Things*, and on occasion have been praised as well as criticized in its pages.) For Neuhaus is that rare religious thinker who "likes contact," as football coaches say. He'd rather hit than play nice. Delighting in attention, he relishes intellectual combat, and his willingness to say what others only think endears him to his admirers. He can also be an elegant and compelling writer, combining the cadences of a preacher with the clever ripostes of a practiced debater. He knows how to flatter, and he knows how to get under someone's skin. His skill at combining the loftiest of moral appeals with the bluntest political rhetoric and tactics makes him an emblematic—and effective—figure in our era of highly partisan politics.

How should liberals, especially secular liberals, think about Neuhaus? How to respond to the challenge he presents, his aggressive efforts to inject religion into politics?

One reaction to avoid is the blunderbuss approach put forth by Linker, an amplification of the equally scattershot efforts of Garry Wills and Andrew Sullivan to raise alarms about Neuhaus. Their strident assessments notwithstanding, Neuhaus is not a fundamentalist or a theocrat. He is a very serious churchman and sophisticated political actor, one who excels at mixing high-powered theology with hardball politics. Neuhaus is well aware, as he wrote in *The Naked Public Square*, that exaggerating the faults of one's foes is a strategic necessity in politics. "Almost every movement depicts its opponents in the least attractive light," he observed, while cautioning his readers to "resist being taken in by inflated and romantic views of politics." It is strategy, more than the revolutionary zeal Linker attributes to him, that explains Neuhaus's outlandish—sometimes frankly operatic—rhetoric about Supreme Court abortion decisions, or the "homosexual agenda," or feminism, or the corruption of secular culture. Rising to the bait, as Linker does over and over again in denouncing a religion-inspired politics, only makes him sound intemperate.

Indeed, the more stridently the theocons' opponents attack the place of religion in our public life, the stronger—at least strategically—the Republican political position becomes with churchgoing voters. Neuhaus knows that trying to divorce religion from politics, especially in America, is a losing proposition. As philosopher and Democratic activist William Galston recently observed, "a simply secularist stance by a great political party is a formula for defeat and irrelevance." Galston argues that the Democratic Party's perceived hostility to people of religious faith has become an enormous handicap, and was in all likelihood the determining factor in the decisive swing of "persuadable" Catholic voters to Bush in 2004. "I think the real story of American politics in the next ten years," Galston predicts, "will be written as much around the behavior of Catholics, persuadable Catholics, as around...evangelical Protestants."

Some observers think the power of the religious right reached a high-water mark in the 2004 election. Possibly. What is certain, however, is that the Democrats' "religion problem" is not going away any time soon.

Father Richard is on intimate terms with both alienated religious groups. As Linker tells the story, Neuhaus first articulated his belief in a populist religious opposition to the nation's allegedly corrupt secular elites in the 1960s, as an associate of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

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and a vociferous opponent of the Vietnam War. During the economic and political turmoil of the 1970s, he became convinced that the United States was undergoing a "crisis of meaning" that only a return to its religious roots could resolve. Along with other evangelical leaders, however, Neuhaus was dismayed by Jimmy Carter's 1979 "White House Conference on the Family," convinced that the conference's goal of finding ways to strengthen American family life had been undermined by the demands of radical feminists and gay activists. Soon afterward, following in the footsteps of his many friends among the mostly Jewish neoconservatives, he threw his support to Ronald Reagan.

Published on the eve of the 1984 election, *The Naked Public Square* was an effort to analyze why the Moral Majority had frightened many Americans even as Reagan was resoundingly reelected. Neuhaus urged evangelicals to replace biblical exhortation and testimony about their private religious experience with "a public language of moral purpose." The best way to do that, he suggested, was to adopt the natural-law arguments long championed by Catholic and some mainline Protestant thinkers. Instead of simply pointing to Bible passages that condemn homosexuality, for example, Christians must make arguments about the self-evident nature and purpose of human sexuality and how those purposes —procreation, the nurturing of children, the normativity of heterosexuality—are incompatible with the public acceptance of same-sex marriage.

The Naked Public Square garnered considerable attention, and opened Republican doors and coffers for the once seemingly left-wing Neuhaus. Three years later, he published *The Catholic Moment*, speculating that the morally and theologically conservative Catholic Church, rather than the burgeoning evangelical movement, would replace the shrinking mainline churches as the moral conscience of the nation. In 1991, he was ordained a Catholic priest, and was soon a confidant of New York's Cardinal John O'Connor and Pope John Paul II, well-placed to follow his vision of building a sturdy bridge between the religious and the political.

Neuhaus can be impatient, even reckless, in his pursuit of that vision. His willingness to push the boundaries of political debate is best illustrated, as Linker points out, by a symposium titled "The End of Democracy?", published in *First Things* soon after the Supreme Court's 1996 Casey decision reaffirming the constitutionality of legalized abortion. Along with Hadley Arkes, Robert George, and others, Neuhaus questioned the political legitimacy of the Supreme Court and, by extension, of American democracy itself. Echoing his apocalyptic, New Left ruminations of the 1960s, he hinted at "morally justified revolution," writing that the Casey decision raised the question of "whether we have reached or are reaching the point where conscientious citizens can no longer give moral assent to the existing regime."

Neuhaus's neocon allies were appalled by his "extremist hysteria," and historian Gertrude Himmelfarb and sociologist Peter Berger both resigned from the magazine's editorial board. Evangelicals, on the other hand, rallied to the magazine's position. Anticipating the political alliance Karl Rove would so effectively orchestrate in the 2004 election, Neuhaus had already been forging ties with conservative leaders in the evangelical community through his friendship with convicted Watergate conspirator Charles Colson. In 1994, Neuhaus, Colson, and other religious figures released a statement titled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." The statement, addressing many of the pressing "culture war" issues dear to conservatives, helped align two groups—or at least elites in both religious camps—long deeply suspicious of one another, and presaged an alliance that would prove critical to the electoral success of George W. Bush.

How stable the alliance is remains to be seen, but there is little doubt that Linker is right in saying that Neuhaus has marshaled a real intellectual and political force. Echoing their hero, Pope John Paul II, the theocons argue that without a "transcendent, a religious vision," a hedonistic democracy (what the pope called "the culture of death") will drift inexorably toward totalitarianism, where no protection from the powerful is available to the weak. Abortion-on-demand, the theocons continue to insist, is the greatest evil undermining the moral character of the nation, and a harbinger of the Brave New World that lies just around the laboratory corner. The impact of such arguments was most obvious in Bush's appointment of several close Neuhaus associates to the President's Council on Bioethics. More recently, it was evident in July, when Bush used the first veto of his presidency to prevent expanding federal funding for stem-cell research.

Abortion, of course, is only the most neuralgic of a host of divisive issues that comprise the so-called culture wars. Whether it is same-sex marriage, welfare reform, or traditional gender roles, the Republican Party has used such "wedge" issues to forge narrow yet effective majorities. As Thomas Edsall points out in his forthcoming *Building Red America: The New Conservative Coalition and the Drive for Permanent Power* (see page 48), many Democrats still don't grasp the fact that cultural issues like marriage and the fate of traditional sexual morality are not peripheral to politics. Like Galston, Edsall argues that the culture wars determine how a crucial segment of the American electorate—one still coming to terms with the social, sexual, racial, and economic upheavals of the last 40 years—votes. Father Neuhaus and his compatriots recognized this reality long ago, and (abetted by their mirror-image opponents on the left) have gleefully helped create and maintain the political polarization that keeps Republicans in power. Some observers think the power of the religious right reached a high-water mark in the 2004 election. Possibly. What is certain, however, is that the Democrats' "religion problem" is not going away any time soon.

For a portrait of an influential and provocative public intellectual, *The Theocons* has some curious omissions. Linker describes Neuhaus as "a hand-

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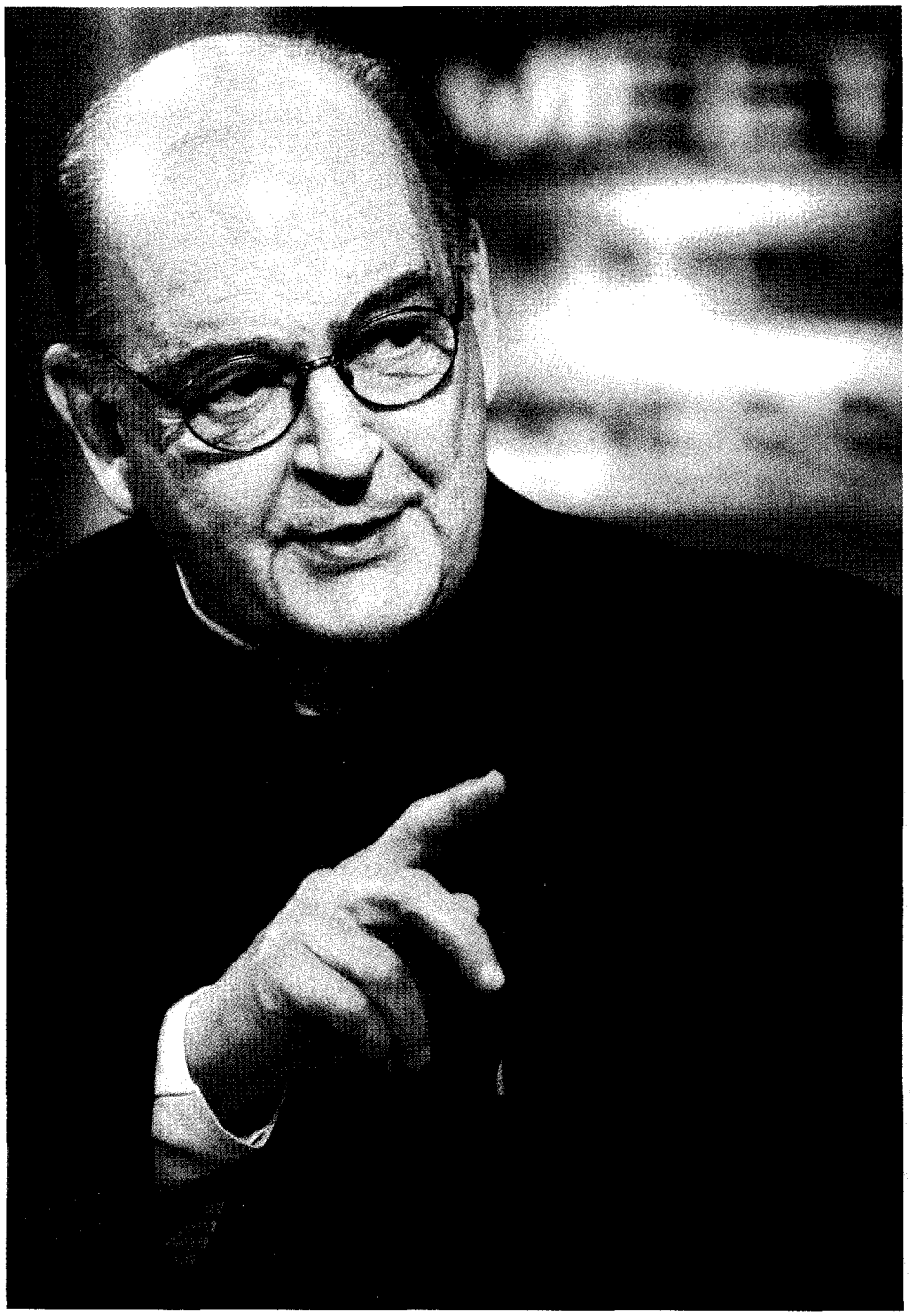
some and charismatic man who delights in public attention," eliciting great loyalty and even affection from his followers. Yet the nature of this charisma is never explained. Occasionally we get a glimpse of Neuhaus and his cronies, cigars and brandy snifters in hand, reacting with "blind rage" to this or that liberal deprecation. But the man's personality remains opaque; he comes across more as an inexhaustible engine of argument than a flesh-and-blood person. Furthermore, if it is true that Neuhaus's "ultimate goal is nothing less than the end of secular politics in America," why did Linker go to work for him in the first place? Not knowing what made Linker enlist in what he now regards as a dangerously authoritarian movement raises serious questions about his forthrightness and credibility. Yet *The Theocons* never offers an explanation of his change of mind and heart.

There are other weaknesses, and excesses, too. Linker is right about Neuhaus's political ambitiousness, but his movement is hardly the ideological colossus this book would have us believe. (Karl Rove, we can assume, returns the phone call from James Dobson or Fred Barnes before the one from Father Richard.) Nor is it plausible that the theocons' ultimate goal is the destruction of the nation's democratic political order. Linker sees inordinate peril in Neuhaus's insistence that democracy be grounded in metaphysical, and ultimately religious, claims about the transcendent nature of the human person. The "liberal bargain" Linker extols, on the other hand, explicitly rejects the need for democratic societies to come to any comprehensive agreement about first principles. In the liberal bargain, we can disagree about the ultimate good, about "first things," and still order our political life in a fair and peaceful way.



GETTY IMAGES, PHOTOGRAPHER ALEX WONG

Richard John Neuhaus is that rare religious thinker who'd rather hit than play nice.

The theocons reject this conception of liberalism, insisting that only a political order based on absolute moral "truth" can protect human dignity and freedom. Such an insistence appears hard to square with our society's inability to agree on the moral truth about such issues as abortion or same-sex marriage. Emphasizing such shortcomings, Linker is too quick to dismiss the appeal of the theocon position. (Neuhaus would argue, for example, that the law's failure to protect unborn life is a far greater threat to democratic values than his protests against *Roe v. Wade*.) In a time when science presents excruciating dilemmas about when human life begins or ends—and about who should make such determinations—it is not just conservatives who balk at the idea that individual autonomy trumps all other moral values. Nor can Linker's strictly secular "liberal bargain" account for the role religious convictions have played, for example, in the triumph of democracy in Poland's Solidarity movement or America's own abolitionist and civil-

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rights struggles.

Suffice it to say that while some on the religious right are anti-democratic, the arguments Neuhaus and company make about the religious origins of our ideas about human dignity and the intrinsic value of each life are hardly a recipe for theocratic tyranny. Liberal religious thinkers embrace similar premises yet come to very different political conclusions. As Galston and Edsall note, while Americans want a firm separation of church and state, they don't want a purely secular public square, and there is no moral or constitutional reason why they should accept one. Yet Linker thinks the explicit disavowal of religious-based moral claims should be a prerequisite for entering into the political debate. He's wrong, both philosophically and historically.

Linker's tendency to make imprecise and exaggerated claims is especially evident in his analysis of Neuhaus's influence with the Catholic hierarchy. He writes, for instance, that the theocons convinced "the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to intervene in the 2004 election on behalf of the Republican Party." The USCCB did no such thing, and in fact Linker later contradicts himself on this score. It is true that a handful of bishops, apparently at Neuhaus's urging, threatened to withhold Communion from John Kerry and other pro-choice Democrats. The vast majority of bishops, however, rejected this demand. Linker proves even more unreliable in reporting on the internal politics of the bishops' conference, particularly with regard to a letter the Vatican's Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger sent concerning the 2004 Communion controversy. According to Linker, Ratzinger endorsed Neuhaus's hard (and Republican-friendly) line. There is scant evidence, however, that the Vatican's aim was to "summarily deny the sacrament of Communion to nearly every Catholic Democrat in the nation," as Linker speculates. His version of the story does little more than buy into theocon claims regarding their own influence in Rome.

A similar resort to right-wing boilerplate mars the book's treatment of two pastoral letters written by the bishops in the 1980s, one on war and peace and the other on economic issues. Linker describes the letters as advocating "a foreign policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament and a socialist economic policy." In fact, the bishops guardedly endorsed the morality of nuclear deterrence, while the socialism of the letter on "Economic Justice for All" consisted in the shocking claim that economic systems must be judged by how they provide for the poor. One can disagree with the bishops, but to say they advocated unilateral disarmament or socialism is nonsense of a recognizably partisan theocon sort.

Again and again Linker lapses into the worst rhetorical excesses of the theocons he is trying to discredit. Baptized into the apocalyptic world of the theocons not long ago, he has returned to warn us that at Neuhaus's direction the Republican Party is leading the nation into "the arms of absolute ecclesiastical authority." Apparently, evangelicals provide the foot soldiers and Catholics the intellectual generals in the theocon battle plan. Linker's worries that the theocons want to put an end to religious pluralism in America sound paranoid. *First Things*, after all, remains an "ecumenical" journal. Presumably Neuhaus would like his many conservative Protestant and Jewish friends to follow him to Rome, but he would not compel them to do so even if he could. Detecting The Grand Inquisitor behind every Roman collar is an old and ugly canard.

Clearly, Linker is still mesmerized by Neuhaus, depicting him as a kind of Charles Foster Kane who holds the nation's political fate in his hands. But politics is a more various and complicated business than that, and while Neuhaus's influence is real, Linker provides little evidence that it is as pervasive as he claims. Republican leaders, after all, have to mollify the competing and often contradictory interests of corporate sponsors, libertarians, and tax-cutters, as well as religious/social conservatives. After six years of Bush, many evangelicals think they have given more than they have received from this administration. Neuhaus's own overreaching—in his support for the war in Iraq, the cogency of Intelligent Design theory, and Congress's intervention in the Terri Schiavo case—has also weakened his position.

Still, if Galston and Edsall are right and the Democratic Party does in fact have a serious religion problem, then contending with Neuhaus and the forces he represents requires a much more nuanced strategy than Linker's over-the-top indictment. Father Richard may not be about to carry out a religious coup, but he remains a formidable presence and a shrewd observer of American culture and politics. After all, there are not many intellectuals or political activists who can boast that they got their start marching with Martin Luther King Jr. and ended up marching (at least figuratively) into Baghdad with George W. Bush. Nor did many religious figures intuitively recognize and embrace the charisma of both King and Pope John Paul II. What's more, Neuhaus understands how to translate these credentials into political clout. "It is in the interest of politicians and the hordes of people who make their living by talking about what politicians do to disguise the stark and simple truth that they are engaged in getting and keeping power," he wrote in *The Naked Public Square*.

If, as Linker suggests, Neuhaus has a prophet's uncompromising temperament, it is the temperament of a prophet strongly drawn to the stark and simple truth of getting and keeping power. Neuhaus has made a number of surprising but very canny conversions in his lifetime. If I were a betting man, I'd pay careful attention to where he is headed. For better or worse, the nation (or a slim electoral majority, at any rate) is usually not far behind, led by a cohort of voters who also happen to be religious believers. It would be a welcome miracle if liberals could get there first, with a plausible appeal to some of those same voters.

Paul Baumann is editor of *Commonweal*.

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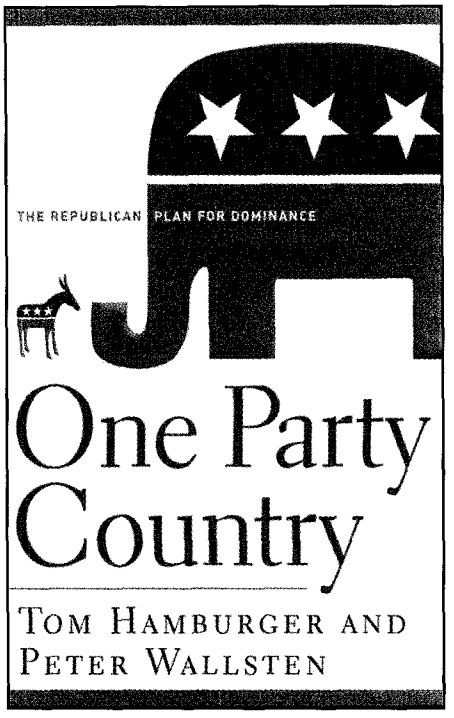
One Party to Rule Them All

Have journalists finally figured out the GOP's game plan?



One Party Country
By Tom Hamburger and Peter Wallsten
Wiley, $25.95

By Mark Schmitt

Last fall, after President Bush nominated his White House counsel, Harriet Miers, to the Supreme Court, the conservative blog Redstate.com explained the vehement opposition to the choice. It was not so much doubts about Miers's conservatism, but the very fact that she could win confirmation without a fight: "[The White House] does not understand how badly some of us want the final showdown with the Dems."

"The final showdown" is a concept that fits awkwardly into the American democratic tradition. Democracy is by its nature a process of continual refinement and accommodation of new ideas, in which no answers are quite final, no structure of power permanent. While liberal ideas had their decades of ascendance, that was not the result of a conscious plan to battle opposing views to the death. And the happy accident that ideology, political party, and economic interest did not follow the same lines kept things always in flux. While it is always naïve to think that the good old days were free from political lies and sabotage, there was generally an assumption that everyone would wake up the next morning and start the fight anew, perhaps with the advantage shifted or lines changed. The Armageddon strain in American politics is a new one.

It has taken a while for journalists, Democrats, and even many rank-and-file Republicans to understand that the DeLay-Rove Republicans were playing a very different game. "These guys are playing for keeps," a recent fundraising letter signed by James Carville warned me. The tactics that Rove calls "game-changers" were intended not just to win an election or two, but to use those victories to rig the rules forever.

The quest for permanent power has finally been chronicled in these two books, one by a pair of *Los Angeles Times* journalists and the other by the veteran Thomas B. Edsall, formerly of *The Washington Post*. The books differ dramatically in style and emphasis, and should be read together. Tom Hamburger and Peter Wallsten concentrate on Republican and White House tactics in a fairly straightforward work of journalism, while Edsall's book is more expansive and daring, traversing economic and demographic trends, history, culture, ideology and political institutions, armed with a bucket full of statistics, to map the external conditions that make those tactics possible.

All three authors are likely nervous that their books will appear just weeks before the 2006 election, and it could be that in November, the argument that the GOP was seeking to establish "permanent power" will seem a bit premature. Indeed, Edsall falters at the very end and admits that the current political setup is "in disequilibrium; if it were a corporation it would be ripe for takeover," although he believes that only a third-party candidate or a true insurgent within one of the major parties could capitalize on this instability. In fact, both books set out to prove that

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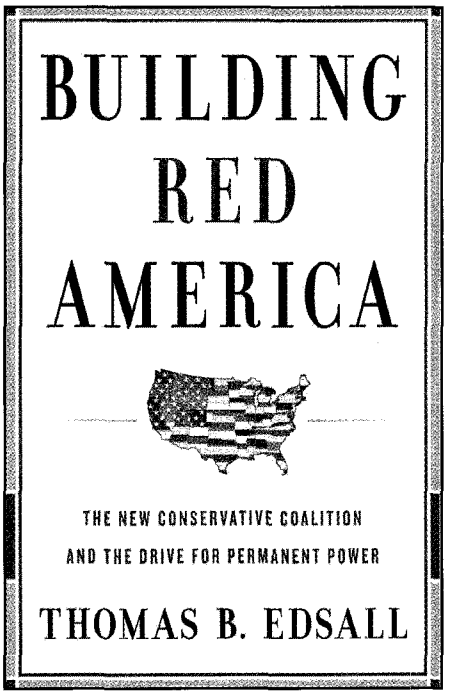
the Republican structure of power is built to survive election defeats, and that the Democratic weakness can persist despite victories, and for the most part, they are persuasive.

The great conservative narrative that drives this quest for power—the theory of history shared by Karl Rove, George Bush, Grover Norquist, Tom DeLay, Dick Cheney, and all their allies—is the myth of a loss of nerve. Nixon, Ford, Reagan, George H.W. Bush and even Newt Gingrich, they believe, all pulled back before that final showdown. They were held back by civility, by a tendency to think of Democrats as partners in government rather than as The Enemy, by fear of bad poll results, by fear of the press, by a sense of the Things That Just Aren't Done, or by shame. As Edsall points out, "the ability to act without shame is a powerful political weapon." The Republican drive for permanent power as told in these books is mostly a story of disabling all those brakes, to ensure that hesitations—such as George H.W. Bush's agreement to a tax-raising bipartisan budget summit in 1990—can never occur again.

George W. Bush, cowboy/wildcatter wannabe, was uniquely suited to the never-flinch plan. A particular achievement of *One Party Country* is to put the president back at the center of the story of the rise of the right. There have been two phases in the interpretation of the Bush era. The first, covering most of the first term, put the focus on Bush himself, whether his dissolute youth and dishonest middle age, or, for supporters, his post-September 11 ability to project moral clarity. Since the reelection, Bush has been seen more as a figurehead placed at the top of a pyramid of conservative power stronger than the individual. Thus, liberals finally began after 2004 to seek to understand the institutions of the right, while conservatives began to persuade themselves that they had simply placed the wrong figurehead on top of a sound structure—quite literally expressed in the title of Bruce Bartlett's recent book, *Impostor*.



Building Red America
By Thomas B. Edsall
Basic Books, $26.00

The pyramid could never have been built without Bush and his father, Hamburger and Wallsten show. More than Goldwater or Reagan, the Bush family undertook the most deliberate plan to wed the economic privilege of their Republican Party to the growing power of social conservatism. Bush's dispatching of three sons to the three big states where Republican conservatism was poised to flourish— Florida, Texas and Colorado (the last for the forgotten son, Neil, in whom the greatest hopes were once placed, but whose attempts to get rich off his name crossed a line that his brothers somehow managed to avoid)—now seems as canny a move as some 17th-century monarch marrying his daughters off to various German princes. It was the presidents Bush who brought into the circle of Republican operatives the two men, Rove and Lee Atwater, to whom most of the tactics of permanent power can be traced.

Most significantly, the Bushes maneuvered the party through a careful, strategic use of race for political purposes, beginning with the elder's break with his family's genteel Republican tradition to oppose the Civil Rights Act of 1964, after some ostentatious soul-searching—a process that resembled his son's elaborate charade of considering all sides of the debate on stem-cell research before following the dictates of the religious right.

Later, though, the first Bush empowered Atwater to cut the deals with African-American politicians that redistricted the South into a few Democratic-packed districts that sent blacks to Congress and a much larger number of marginally Republican districts that elected far-right whites. And then George W. Bush understood that racial voting patterns were so well established that it was time to shift gears, to reach out to African-Americans and Hispanic voters. It was probably a matter of cynically simple math: When Republicans are winning 80 percent of the white vote in parts of the South, is it easier to try to boost that to 85 percent, or to boost the share of the black vote from 10 percent to 15 percent by reaching the culturally very conservative older African-Americans?

So whereas Jeb Bush's answer to the question, "What would you do for black people?"—"Probably nothing"—cost him his first attempt to win the governorship of Florida in 1994, his brother devised "compassionate conservatism" and embraced school choice in order to reach a greater number of African-Americans, and developed what his campaign called the "I love you" plan to reach Hispanics. George W. Bush sharply rebuked California Governor Pete Wilson over his early-1990s anti-immigrant initiatives.

I bring this up at some length because it's the one point of difference between the two books. At the core of Edsall's is the dynamic that he explored in the 1992 book, *Chain Reaction*, which he wrote with his wife Mary D. Edsall: the disaffection of the white male voter.

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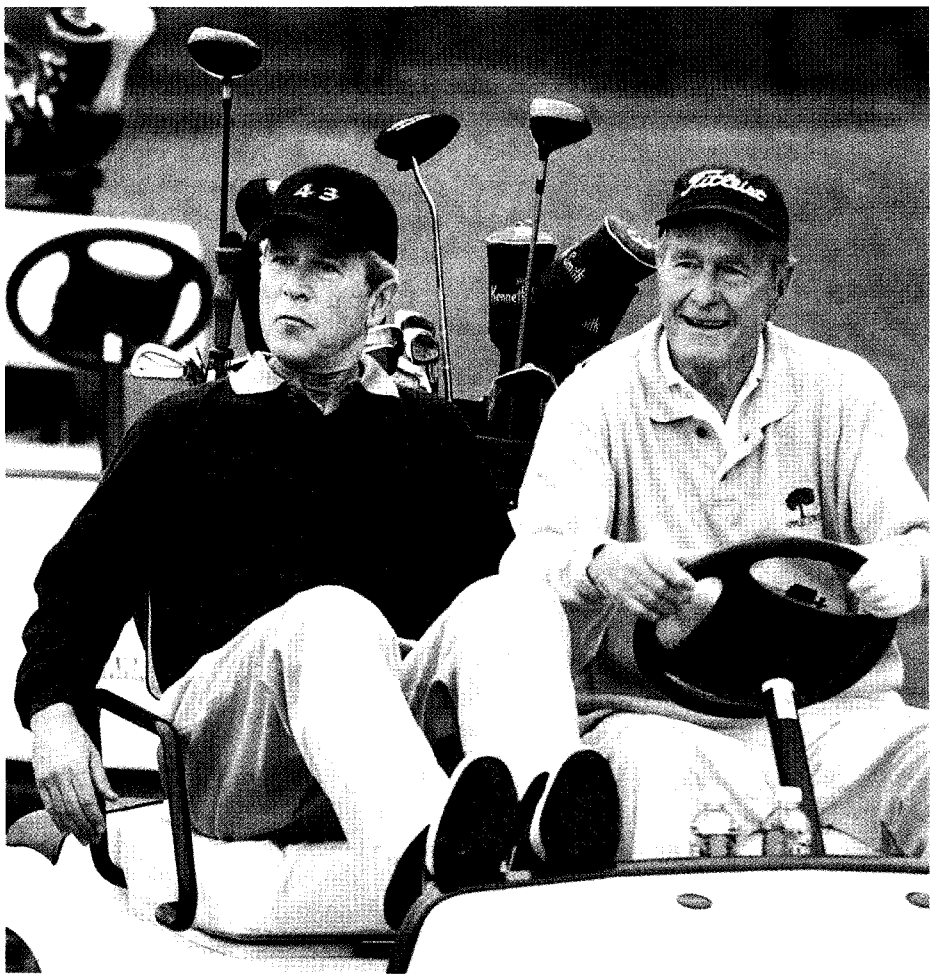
Shifting gender roles and the claims of racial equality, together with the anxiety created by the meltdown of the manufacturing economy, broke the middle-class base of the Democratic Party. The rest is just tactics to capitalize on this big trend. Edsall views the politics of race in terms essentially unchanged from the early 1990s, arguing that hostility to big government is largely a code for benefit programs that white voters believe are directed largely to minorities.

While race will always be a sharp dividing line in American politics, and one dismisses its influence at great risk, we have to acknowledge that something about the tactics changed: Why did Bush choose to dodge the question on affirmative action when it came to the Supreme Court, rather than exploit the issue? Why in the No Child Left Behind Act did he do something that no Democrat quite dared, which was to target funds to the worst—that is, minority—schools? While perhaps as cynical as the old racial tactics represented by the Southern Strategy, it was nonetheless a recognition that that strategy had reached its limits.

When it came to the realities of race and poverty, Bush may have known better than to say "probably nothing" when asked what he would do. But with tax cuts and deregulation his only domestic priority, nothing is what he did for black America, as revealed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Black approval of Bush reached a statistically improbable two percent last fall. On immigration, while Bush tried to occupy a reasonable centrist position, the conservative structure he sat atop was built on politics more like Pete Wilson's, and by unleashing that beast, Bush dealt his party a setback with Hispanics as well. "I love you" only goes so far.

Since these new tactics haven't worked, the post-Bush Republican Party will face a choice between continuing the superficial conciliation on race and immigration (a position represented by Sen. McCain) or to move back to the traditional strategy of provoking white resentment. I wish Edsall had written more about the changing tactics, and that Hamburger and Wallsten had said more about the failure of those tactics.



GETTY IMAGES, PHOTOGRAPHER LUKE FRAZZA

The Bush family undertook a deliberate plan to wed the economic privilege of their Republican Party to the growing power of social conservatism.

Stalk the vote

These three journalists aren't in the "What is to be done?" business, so readers have to supply their own answers. The tactics described in these books, particularly *One-Party Nation*, seem to fall into four categories that call for different kinds of responses:

First, there are tactics that Democrats must master for themselves, immediately, and if they don't, one might suspect that there is some secret conspiracy to destroy the party from within. Chief among these is the modern art of targeting voters for mobilization efforts. The Democratic voter-mobilization formula is decades-old and dirt-simple: find precincts that generally vote 65 percent Democratic, and get everyone to the polls. Top it off with union and African-American voter-turnout efforts, and the Democratic machine usually had an edge over Republicans. But, as both Edsall and Hamburger/Wallsten reveal, starting in 2001, Republicans began to approach turnout in a totally different way, looking for likely Republican voters wherever they live. By using the most sophisticated techniques of consumer marketing, they knew the magazines their potential voters read, the cable stations they watched, and other demographic characteristics, and then they looked for voters who

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looked like Republican voters. As a result, while Democratic turnout efforts in Ohio in 2004 concentrated on massive turnout in the African-American neighborhoods of Cleveland and the other urban cores, ignoring the suburbs and rural areas of the state, Republicans had information on every voter, and could find that single Bush sympathizer living on a block papered with Kerry-Edwards signs.

Similarly, Republicans have a much more subtle understanding of public opinion and the forces that activate it. Liberals tend to take a highly literal approach. We define a problem—for example, people's anger at HMOs—then come up with a policy that might directly address the problem, give it a name like "Patients' Bill of Rights," then send out a pollster. We find out that 70 percent of people don't like their health insurance, and 65 percent favor a Patients' Bill of Rights. Boom, add it to the list. Republicans understand that broad support for a policy is irrelevant; what matters is whether support or opposition can mobilize voters. An unpopular position that intensely motivates a small constituency is far more valuable than generalized support for something that doesn't. Democrats must master the art of constructing majorities out of smaller, activated constituencies, brought together in coalition.

Edsall describes well the relationship between the Republican Party and the interest groups that make up its awkward coalition. A conservative activist like Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation "conceives of an ideal world in which his conservatism and the Republican Party are one and the same." In contrast, Edsall writes, the liberal interest groups "were created when liberals and Democrats were in power," and its leaders "all see themselves and their goals as separate and distinct from those of the Democratic Party." The Democrats are half a party, with their strongest ideological allies always keeping one foot out of it. This is a story worthy of a book of its own, but something in this relationship must change.

The second category of Republican tactics of permanent power are those that must be banished from our public life forever. Hamburger and Wallsten discuss in great detail the misuse of executive branch power for raw political purposes. Karl Rove apparently dropped by unannounced to meetings of managers at the Fish and Wildlife Service and sent polling data to political appointees in such agencies to ensure that routine decisions were made according to the White House's political priorities. Workshops on how to apply for funds for abstinence education were located in certain electorally key states in order to mobilize religious groups. There are dozens of similar examples.

The reason it's so important that the other party gain the subpoena power conferred by control of one house of Congress this fall is to be able to understand and curb such abuses of power. The purpose is not revenge, or impeachment. It's so that the next time a White House political operative—of either party—puts undue pressure on a line manager in the government, that manager can say, "I'm sorry, ma'am, but I just can't do that. Remember the congressional hearings the last time?" These are things that in the past Just Weren't Done, and that sense of limits imposed not by law but by custom and fear of shame—a deeply conservative principle, incidentally—must be restored.

In a third category are tactics and situations that will be very difficult for Democrats to emulate, and equally difficult to eliminate. The most important of these, well described in both books, is what Edsall calls "the merger between the Republican Party and business." This is not just a matter of campaign contributions; that's a very small part of it. There is, for example, the practice of getting businesses to hire Republican operatives and politicians, allowing Rove to exult, "We can now go to students at Harvard and say, 'There is now a secure retirement plan for Republican operatives.'"

And above all, there is the massive investment in voter education and turnout through businesses, efforts led by the Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers, and the Business-Industry Political Action Committee (BIPAC). Just to take one of these, BIPAC had 80 organizers in 14 key states, and in Iowa, which Bush won by 13,000 votes, the business group registered 16,000 voters.

Conservative as they were, most businesses had avoided partisan politics well into the 1990s. Most thought it was against the law to talk to employees about who to vote for. And they probably didn't think that their workers would vote the right way. But, Hamburger and Wallsten write, "workers understood that manufacturing jobs were evaporating. They no longer dared dismiss out of hand arguments that what was good for their employers was also good for them." This is a key corrective to the idea that working people vote Republican because they put social values above their economic interest. In many cases, they see their economic interest as bound up in their employers' interest; they think of themselves as employees rather than workers. It is ironic that this occurs at a time when they are far less likely to be bound to one employer (and one union) for life. But the very insecurity—the sense that employers are vulnerable too, that a Caterpillar or GM could go bankrupt—drives a panicked sense of loyalty that overrides any sense of class solidarity.

The challenge for liberals in this is profound, and it's not just a matter of matching their voter drives or increasing organized labor's percentage of the workforce from 11 percent to 13 percent. It may require building some new alliances with business, perhaps on health care, so that both employers and workers can see that their interests are not with the short-term, high-inequality, tax-cut agenda of the Republicans but with a long-term, balanced vision of a productive economy and a new social contract.

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Finally, there are tactics described in these books that require no response because they have backfired. *One Party Country* is neatly structured to conclude with two chapters on the system of permanent power "put to the test." The first of the two chapters uses Social Security as an example of the tactics at work, and as promised, it is a case study in all the tactics, from the elevation of politics over policy, strong centralized control of the plan from the White House, bullying of business, etc. But it didn't work. The authors say that it faded after attention shifted to Hurricane Katrina, but really it was dead long before that.

One of the lessons should be that sometimes policy—even its details—matters. The White House never had a real plan for Social Security privatization, jumped around from one sketchy idea to another, and denied aspects of the plan if they seemed unpopular. The plan never got off the ground, and the political vision—that it would solidify younger people around a vision of an ownership society in which they would make it on their own rather than depending on government—was shattered. The limits of the Bush-Rove strategy were revealed.

In a wonderful chapter near the end of his book, Edsall describes the core Republican demographic: affluent white men who are extremely tolerant of risk. The 30 percent of men who embrace risk are much more politically conservative than other men or most women, and according to a health study cited by Edsall, "hold very different attitudes, characterized by trust in institutions and authorities and by anti-egalitarianism." These extreme risk-takers also tend to have the resources to protect themselves from the consequences of risk. Thus Republican policies embrace the high-risk economy, while Democrats build their platform around the security embodied in the words Social Security. But Republican tactics are themselves a risk-taker's move. So many of the tactics described in these books, particular the deliberate polarization of the electorate, skirt the edge of disaster at every turn. Meanwhile, Democrats are paralyzed because their very approach to politics is based on caution, and protecting what little power they have. These two books attempt to make the case that the Republican right, like those affluent men, like George W. Bush himself, are so protected, so affluent, so secure, that they can afford to roll the dice, and if they lose an election or two, they won't fall far.

Mark Schmitt is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation and a columnist for *The American Prospect.*

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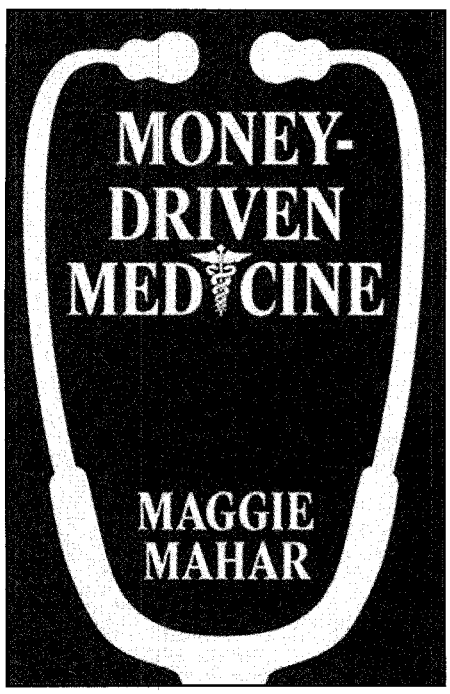
Flat Lines and Bottom Lines

Think money drives medicine? You don't know the half of it.



Money-Driven Medicine
By Maggie Mahar
Collins, $27.95

By Ezra Klein

Filled with arresting statistics and stunning anecdotes, Maggie Mahar's *Money-Driven Medicine* is the sort of book you can't help but tattoo with a thousand underlines, exclamation points, and scrawled comments. So it's surprising that the most poignant lines come just seven pages into the preface. "In the course of these interviews," Mahar writes, "I was surprised by just how many physicians returned my calls. The great majority did not know me; I expected responses from perhaps 20 percent. Instead, four out of five called back. Most talked for 30 minutes—or longer." Generally, a writer researching her exposé of an industry needs to seek out, convince, and cajole her informants. Not here. The state of health-care is so alarming that the participants are desperate to blow their whistles, if only someone would listen.

Mahar did, and closely. Her book offers a guided tour to the medical landscape few patients like to envision—the one where profit, not health, guides the actors. *Money-Driven Medicine* is really an investigation into the ways the quest for cash infects and distorts every level of the health-care system. It's a big topic, and Mahar's dogged insistence on allowing no facet to go unreported makes it larger than even the cynical among us assume. Insurance companies, we already knew, are watching for the bottom line. Big Pharma, too. But your doctor? Did you know that his reimbursement rates encourage him to give you the most, rather than the least, treatment? And did you know that your hospital is likely a private institution, dedicated to improving its bottom line by lowering labor costs, which means dangerously overstretching your anesthesiologists and surgeons? Or that senior administrators in the FDA consider the pharmaceutical industry, rather than the American people, their clients? Money, Mahar believes, is destroying the quality, integrity, and efficiency of the American health-care system, leaving it prey to all manner of incentives and imperatives decent people would be repulsed by if they understood. And if her point isn't precisely new, the hundreds of unnerving examples, anecdotes, and tales of times when lucre's influence turned filthy give it a force and coherence it's never had before.

If the book has a flaw, in fact, it's that the air is too thick with noise, the crush of complaints and concerns overwhelming in their urgency. The result is nightmarish, both in its intensity and its tendency to flip jerkily from one unsettling scene to the next. We leap from Lew Silverman, a dying diabetic whose doctors can't conquer their god complex long enough to let him pass without a horrifying array of unwanted and hopeless treatments, to Buddy Rich, a seemingly healthy 60-year-old whose small bowel cancer went first unnoticed, then tragically untreated, as he was repeatedly turned away due to lack of insurance. By the time we've reached the FDA's negligence in yanking malfunctioning defibrillators from the market, the tales of woe and wrongdoing are blurring together—at times in almost contradictory fashion, as when Mahar laments

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the excess of care, then, with whiplash-speed, segues into a condemnation of withholding treatments. But a bad dream's occasional disjointedness hardly serves to mitigate its terror. Somebody wake me.

What the manifold tales, stats, and interviews illuminate is a system almost irreversibly infected by money. The story here is one of market failure, of a peculiar sector where the drive for profit demands not efficiencies and innovations, but volume and market share. That may be fine when we're talking widgets, but when it means more heart surgeries, less time with patients, more collusion with drug companies, and higher prices for less care—well, even Adam Smith would feel a little ill. But believe me, he'd think twice before summoning the ambulance.

What Mahar excels at is finding the instances where that market failure turned deadly in a routine way. We hear about plenty of corruption and evil, but her innovation is to clearly lay out how the pursuit of profit, conducted in ways that would be neutral and natural in any other industry, turns deadly when transposed to medicine. One of her many examples concerns California's Redding Medical Center, one of the best cardiac-surgery centers in the state. At the head of the Heart Institute was a pair of hotshot surgeons, Dr. Chae Hyun Moon and Dr. Fidel Realyvasquez Jr., renowned in the field and respected by their colleagues. At least until the FBI raided their offices, charging them with forcing hundreds of unneeded surgeries upon unsuspecting patients.

About half of their operations were found to be unnecessary; a quarter were performed on patients with no serious heart problems whatsoever. Thirty-eight-year-old rancher Steven Hunt made the mistake of setting foot into their unit in late 2001. He was opened up for a bypass operation two days later. Not long after, the incision developed a hernia, and his upper-body strength deteriorated, ending his work as a rancher. The tragedy of it all was that Hunt suffered from nothing more than high blood pressure, easily controllable through medication and diet. When you buy an unnecessary widget, you risk your garage space. When you receive an unnecessary heart surgery, you risk your life and livelihood. But what Moon and Realyvasquez were doing—increasing their volume by aggressively pushing their product—is the most natural method of increasing profits around. The problem, as Mahar explains, is that though it's easy enough for a customer to pass on the widget, it's far harder to argue with a trained medical professional warning that any delay on the implementation of his solemnly intoned recommendations could mean death.

Mahar also adds a level of macroanalysis too often absent in this sort of tome. She smoothly lays out how each

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level of the system has ceased operating in the checks-and-balances style in which it was conceived, and has instead fallen prey to capitalism's irresistible push towards aggregation and reinforcement. As an example, you'd expect, possibly, that the hospitals and doctors would be kept in check by the insurers in a sort of countervailing powers arrangement, as it's in the insurer's interest to limit the treatments offered to its members. But, as Mahar explains, the insurers make their money before the treatments are delivered, by denying insurance to those likely to need it. Unable to really fight at the point of care, insurers have grown adept at passing on the costs, squeezing employers and individuals with double-digit premium hikes at the same time the insurance industry enjoys double-digit profit growth.

Underlying all this is the fact that medicine is particularly vulnerable to perversions of Say's Law, which states that supply creates its own demand. Diving into the data, Mahar relates Dartmouth researcher Jack Wennberg's findings that the amount of care a patient receives is scarily dependent on where he lives. The more specialists, hospitals, and doctors you've got access to, the more surgeries, medicines, and treatments you're likely to undergo. Worse, there's no evidence that the outcomes differ between the two groups, and plenty of evidence that they don't. Indeed, for those receiving the most intense care, the outcomes are worse—a predictable finding, considering the risk of complications, physician error, and infections.

The question, of course, is why this goes on. Conservatives, enmeshed in their current push for so-called consumer-driven medicine, would have you believe that patients are to blame—they demand the surgeries, excited as all get-out to spend a couple weeks on a luxurious hospital cot. Under this analysis, all the system needs is more patient vulnerability. As Arkansas governor and likely 2008 presidential candidate Mike Huckabee puts it, "One of the reasons we have a health-care crisis is because, as a consumer, I don't have that much skin in the game. A lot of us feel there needs to be a transformation from a third-party [insurance] system to more [financial] participation by the [patient]."

Conservatives, enmeshed in their current push for so-called consumer-driven medicine, would have you believe that patients are to blame—they demand the surgeries, excited as all get-out to spend a couple weeks on a luxurious hospital cot.

Mahar neatly dispenses with that excuse, reminding readers that patients don't actually know what they want. The doctor-patient relationship, indeed, is built on a trust akin to deification—we rely on their extreme training and vast knowledge to navigate an organism that we inhabit but don't understand, and we take their recommendations as the unswerving expressions of their education and oath. Forgotten in this analysis is that medicine is a business like any other, and profit matters. Even the motto of non-profit hospitals has become "No margin, no mission," to express the reality that their capital comes from bond investors, and if the investors aren't happy, there won't be a hospital left to treat either the poor or the rich.

But that, of course, is the way of things in a system where the richest stakeholders have created a poor health-care system but an excellent business model that generates massive profits, a certain portion of which are funneled to legislators across the country in order to convince them that the preservation of our free-market system is of the utmost importance.

And it's precisely that fundamental overvaluing of the free market that Mahar forces us to question. She quotes medical economist Rashi Fein's warning that "[w]e live in a society, not just an economy." And our society has to decide if this is the care structure we want. Because the market has done nothing wrong here—it exists to seek profit, and thus provides no easy villains, just a plethora of unfortunate outcomes. It is up to us to decide if the ultimate goal of care should be cash, if our system of insurance should incentivize identifying those most in need of care so they can be denied access to it, if our hospitals should fret over the bottom line or the flat line, if our physicians should practice in a context that leaves them desperate to confide in the unknown reporter who leaves an unexpected message on their voicemail.

Ezra Klein is a writing fellow at *The American Prospect*.

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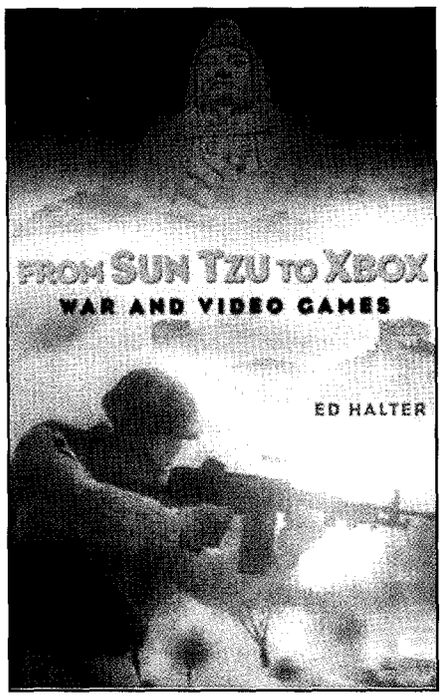
Couch Warriors

How video games aren't helping the military win the war on terror.



From Sun Tzu to Xbox
By Ed Halter
$16.95, Thunder's Mouth Press

By Avi Klein

In 1973, a reporter for *Rolling Stone* visited the Stanford Artificial Intelligence Lab to check up on computer hackers—"a mobile new-found elite, with its own apparat, language and character, its own legends and humor." Although much of the nation's investment capital for computer science came from military and government sources, the reporter found the hackers—the term was not yet a pejorative—mainly counter-culture types, a clan of intellectual druggies staying up all night playing and coding primitive computer games. "These are heads, most of them," he wrote. "Half or more of computer science is heads."

The article gave the impression of a new counterculture that had somehow bridged the gap between dorks and dopeheads, playing video games on the military's dime. It's no wonder that some parents viewed the arcade as their own parents might have a pool hall. But the hackers' efforts were critical in laying a bridge between the number-crunching of the 1940s and 1950s and the video-game culture that took off in the 1980s and lasts to this day. During the day, they might have programmed a tank simulator for the army. But at night, they were tweaking it to enhance playability, and these efforts eventually ran downstream into the consumer market. It is no accident that most video games involve shooting ballistics.

The rise of video game and computer culture neatly tracked the martial and patriotic impulses of the Reagan years. Before, computer games were associated with the underground. Suddenly, however, it was the age of the nerd warrior, like Matthew Broderick in *WarGames*, outthinking renegade computer programs and the fogey military planners who didn't understand the dangerous power of technology. Drugs were out, America was in, and for the first time the pasty math-club president could see himself as the next Patton. Trolling through the arcades, Martin Amis thought gamers—"intense, thin-lipped characters, whose fantasy lives are clearly of martial bent"—were seeking more than a vicarious experience. They actually saw themselves on the front lines.

Amis could afford to be critical, but the President of the United States could not. Video games were the first popular technology that kids understood but their parents didn't. This ignorance led many to exaggerate their value. "Watch a 12-year-old take evasive action and score multiple hits while playing Space Invaders," Ronald Reagan told a crowd gathered at Epcot Center in 1983, "and you will appreciate the skills of tomorrow's pilot." Reagan cautioned his youthful listeners not to "tell their parents the president of the United States says it's all right for them to go ahead and play video games all the time. Homework, sports and friends still come first." It was morning in America, yes, but no Nintendo before breakfast.

Reagan was not the first leader to connect games and sport to military skill, explains *Village Voice* film and literary critic Ed Halter in *From Sun Tzu To X-Box*, an interesting if unfocused survey of the

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history of playing at combat, an activity that has captivated men and boys since war and play were invented. Nearly all ancient civilizations, Halter writes, "reveal evidence of skill and chance that take the form of abstracted battle—miniature metaphors for war, primitive board games composed of props made from stone or wood, clay or porcelain."

Of them, chess has been the most successful. Although the game's roots are obscure, there is no shortage of legends that emphasize its martial roots. One tale holds the game came to Persia from India as a "challenge of wits" between two jealous rulers, with all accounts to be settled on the simulated battlefield. The Indian king hoped to confound his Persian counterpart, but the Persian ruler, who also had to figure out the rules on his own, was victorious, "and for good measure [sent] a new game of his own court's invention, backgammon, as a gift in return." In another story, the viziers of an orphaned prince, anxious that the inexperienced monarch had not had time to learn about war, trained him with a chess set. "The same caution in attack and coolness in defense which you have to exercise here," they tell him, "you will have to put in practice on the battlefield." He follows their instructions and soundly routs his enemies, forever giving credit to his training on the squared battlefield.

Egyptian and Chinese traditions had similar games. Illustrations from the *Book of the Dead* show Ramses III in a match of *t'au* with Isis, probably "the earliest known game with battle as its theme," though nobody knows how it was played. Go, on the other hand, is still extremely popular in Asia today 4,000 years after its invention in China. Yet none of these games purported to imitate battle; they instead offered pedagogical lessons in wit and the virtues of planning—a stimulation, not a simulation. At least, that's how the army saw it. In first-century China, one games historian writes, Go "was popular not only among the military but also in literary circles, for many courtiers, not satisfied by mere literary distinctions, hungered for the military glory that could be won on the frontier."

The war game as a practical experience had to wait, as did many advances in military education, for the professionalism of the Germany army in the 19th century. *Kriegspiel* was played on a recessed table, sometimes using sand and plaster terrain, other times precise topographical maps, and always relying on authentic military order: The metal soldiers could advance and retreat only as far as real soldiers could move during each player's two-minute turn. The game could go on all night, which no doubt was part of its charm, and there are accounts of a young Prince Wilhelm taking on his cousin and future rival the Czarevich Nicholas, though Halter doesn't say who typically won. (Considering the German military aristocracy's mania for dueling, *Kriegspiel* was probably a healthy diversion all around.) And in choosing blue and red for the opposing teams, a certain Lieutenant von Reisswitz set the standard for centuries to come.

The tabletop versions, popularized for Christmas as Risk and Stratego, would remain the standard through the Second World War. But with its emphasis on land warfare and the seizing of territory, and with its reliance on two-dimensional space, alternating turns, and the almost perfect knowledge of the enemy's strength as represented by metal figurines, the board game has become a tad outmoded. "Modern war," says mathematician John Kemeny, "has become too complex to be entrusted to the intuition of even the most experienced military commander. Only our giant brains [i.e. computers] can calculate all the possibilities."

It was left to the RAND Corporation, working with Air Force contracts, to reinterpret games for the nuclear age, to connect gamesmanship to brinkmanship, board games to motherboards. Team members, who included both RAND staffers and military and diplomatic officials, would work over three days to resolve world crises scenarios. Unlike the traditional war game, this version "also factored in economic and diplomatic concerns, all of which were converted to numerical values for calculation." Organizers downplayed physical verisimilitude, deemphasized rules, intentionally created incomplete and misleading information for the players, and encouraged the "exploration of novel strategies." It was a partnership for a new age, wrote one army planner in 1956, a "scientist-soldier team whose joint function is to outguess any conceivable enemy in any conceivable future situation."

As a way of predicting crisis outcomes, RAND eventually found the games unwieldy, but they were far from useless. RAND's interest in game theory was also responsible for popularizing ideas like mutually assured destruction and the prisoner's dilemma. As such, nuclear deterrence relied in large part on planners effectively thinking out problems in advance and being able to distinguish between nightmare situations and controllable outbreaks of instability. "Maybe the game's value was the experience of strategy formulation," writes Sharon Ghamari-Tabrizi in *The Worlds of Herman Kahn*, "rather than the outcome of play." It was strategy after all, and not tactics, that won the Cold War.

Halter goes through all this at a fine pace, (although there are so many spelling and punctuation errors that the reader will wonder if the copyediting was simulated as well.) But his real interest is in video games and how the military might incorporate them into training. Infantrymen already train in live-fire exercises and mock laser-gun battles, he explains. Training them using video games takes advantage of the gamer's tireless need to master certain skills before advancing to the next level. "It's about instilling patterns of actions, and making those patterns second nature," Halter argues. It was Reagan's video-game fantasy come true. In the 1980s, recruiters staked out arcades, looking for new soldiers. One pinball wizard, who doubled as arcade attendant, even claimed that a recruiter promised him he could skip boot camp and go right into ballistics training. Now the military wanted to set up arcades of its own.

In the 1980s, commercially available video games were too primitive to approx-

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imate the first-person experience of combat. But by the late 1990s, hyper-realistic games were selling millions of copies nationwide. Best of all, the price was right. Tank and flight simulators cost millions of dollars per unit. Commercial video games, however, could be bought for less than $50. After examining 30 titles—not bad work if you can get it—the aliens in the adventure shoot-em-up Doom II were replaced with Warsaw Pact troops and set in a dusty eastern European environment. One commander recommended that Marine Doom be played under the most realistic conditions possible: "Leaders can generate stress by placing time limits on decisions, [or] by conducting games immediately following a strenuous PT session or forced march." What fun. It was not a success, for reasons Halter fails to explain. Still, the effort "signaled a new interest in the use of publicly available games for official military training," what came to be known in typical purchasing jargon as the "commercial platform training aid."

Whether these efforts of the "military-entertainment complex" will ever come to anything is unknown, but many start-up companies are trying to jump on board while the military interest in video games lasts. Halter details them exhaustively. In one, soldier-participants wear a vibrating waist-pack that delivers a brief shock when the player is hit. Another is developing a "scent collar" for those that want to smell the napalm in the morning. Newer games emphasize desert and urban scenes, and one company even specializes in providing game-makers with authentic former Iraqi officers to play the bad guys. But one can't help but see the military's efforts as akin to the traveling salesman who believes a new business-card scanner from Sky Mall will ramp up his monthly numbers. There just isn't any evidence that any of it works, and Halter doesn't even bother trying to prove otherwise.

Of course, wasteful, misguided military spending is not a new story. And video simulation will always have its place in the military, one or two missteps regardless. But if we want smart, technologically savvy, freethinking armies of one, setting the grunts free to play video games hardly seems like a good step forward. Instead, the military should consider embarking on a crash chess training program. It might not help the troops much in the field, and some might resist it. But as Napoleon observed, "A soldier will fight long and hard for a bit of colored ribbon." Authorize a chess medal, and the troops will gladly lay it all out on the white and black squares.

Avi Klein is senior writer at the *Homeland Security Daily Wire*.

LEGAL SEA FOODS

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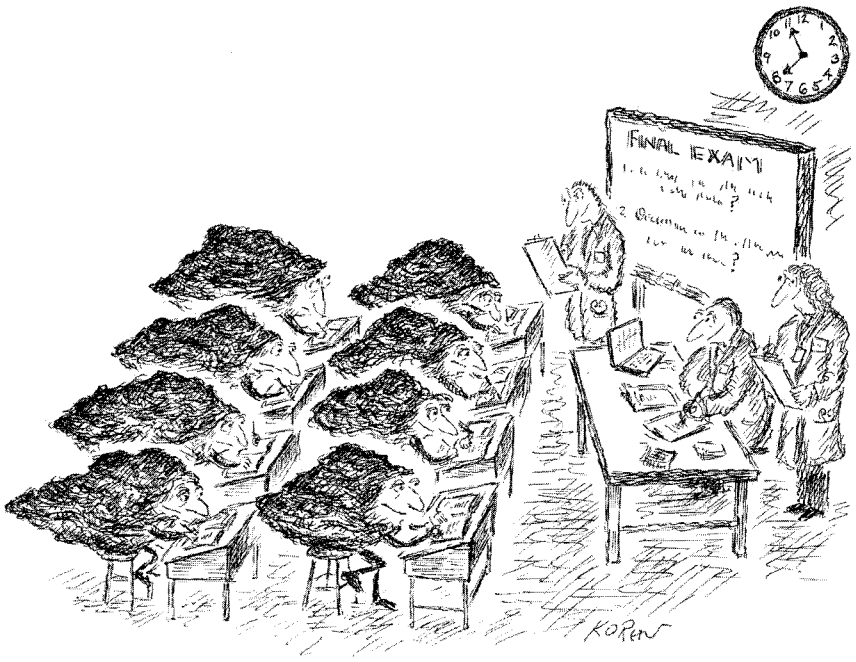

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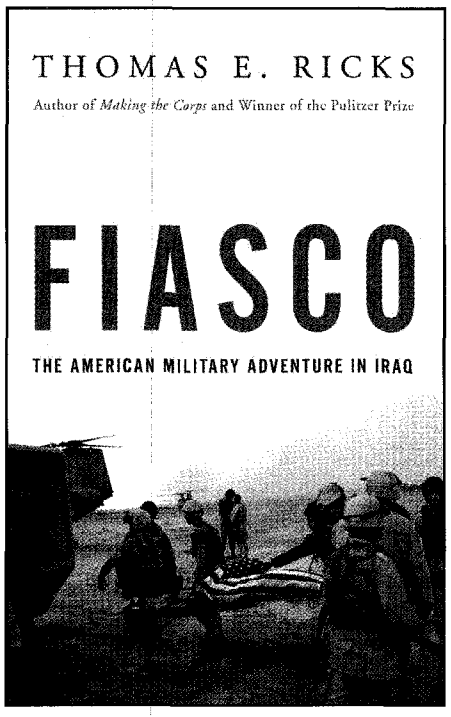

Fiasco
By Thomas E. Ricks
The Penguin Press, $27.95

Uniform Disaster

In blowing the Iraq war, Bush and Rumsfeld have had plenty of help—from the generals.

By Joseph Galloway

Unless the Visigoths are knocking at your gate and darkness threatens to consume the civilized world, wars are generally a mistake—a confession of a government's failure to find some other way of settling disputes short of sending out 19-year-olds with rifles to kill other 19-year-olds.

And even the most righteous of wars throughout history are riddled with errors large and small, strategic and tactical, that are paid for with the blood of soldiers and civilians. All of it falls under the term "fog of war". The only righteous major war of the 20th century, which consumed some 60 million lives, was rife with bloody mistakes.

Even so, the current and ongoing war in Iraq may yet be written in history as the only war that was a total mistake from beginning to end, where virtually every decision taken both by the civilian leadership, which began it on false pretenses and an overdose of arrogance and ignorance, and the military leadership, which bungled and bumbled and knuckled under, was wrong, wrong, wrong.

When those future historians begin their search for how such a thing could happen, *Washington Post* veteran military correspondent Tom Ricks's most aptly titled book *Fiasco* will be an invaluable starting point. Ricks pulls it all together—how the Bush administration, prodded by its neoconservative handmaidens, took us into an unnecessary war in a tinderbox country and region, and then screwed it up big time.

The dedication of *Fiasco* is simple: "For the war dead." This is followed by a simple quotation from fourth-century B.C. military strategist Sun Tzu: "Know your enemy, know yourself, one-hundred battles, one-hundred victories."

The confluence of arrogance, ignorance, and incompetence is stunning—and by now familiar to even the most casual consumer of the news. Ricks rightly notes that the fault lies foremost with President Bush, but he declares that "it takes more than one person to make a mess as big as Iraq." The failures were systemic: major lapses within the national-security bureaucracy, from a weak National Security Council to an overweening Pentagon and a confused intelligence apparatus, coupled with the almost complete lack of oversight by Congress and the media.

All of this combined to create a haunting, costly and deadly debacle whose ending has yet to be written three and a half years, 2,550 dead American soldiers, and $300 billion of taxpayer money later.

But what sets *Fiasco* apart from other histories of the Iraq war is Ricks's account of the inadequacy of the military leadership. Ricks, who interviewed more than a hundred senior military officers and sifted through some 30,000 pages of official documents, is withering: "While the Bush administration—and especially Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and L. Paul Bremer III—bear much of the

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responsibility for the mishandling of the occupation in 2003 and early 2004," he writes, "blame must also rest with the leadership of the U.S. military, who didn't prepare the U.S. Army for the challenge it faced, and then wasted a year by using counter-productive tactics that were employed in unprofessional ignorance of the basic tenets of counter-insurgency warfare." Ricks notes that in that long, desolate post-Vietnam period when the Army was rebuilding itself, it had deliberately thrown away all the lessons in counter-insurgency warfare learned at so high a price in that bitter decade-long war.

Formal Pentagon consideration of how to attack Iraq began in November of 2001 when, in the wake of 9/11, Under Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz's decade-long, wrong-headed obsession with overthrowing Saddam Hussein gained currency in the administration. Wolfowitz, whose extended family had perished under the Nazis, saw the Iraq conflict as he did most geopolitics, through the prism of the Holocaust. But it was a flawed analogy: as the former head of Central Command (CENTCOM) General Anthony Zinni pointed out, Saddam was less Adolf Hitler than Tony Soprano. But to Wolfowitz containment smacked of appeasement. And so the push to persuade the higher-ups to go to war began.

From the outset, there was tension between the uniformed military leadership and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld over two issues: whether to invade Iraq at all and, if so, how many troops would be needed. Army leadership rightly wanted to maintain focus on finishing the job in Afghanistan where the Taliban regime had just fallen, and where al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden were on the run.

U.S. Central Command, which had responsibility for 32 nations in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa including Iraq, was caught between Army caution and Rumsfeld's impatience, according to Ricks. Zinni's replacement as CENTCOM commander, Army Gen. Tommy Franks, began shuttling between his headquarters in Tampa and Washington. Franks—described by Ricks as "a cunning man, but not a deep thinker"—would become the fulcrum in planning for the war and eventually would buy into Rumsfeld's vision of a technological revolution in warfare that would allow the U.S. military to do far more with less. Moreover, Franks was a disaster as a commander: He was tyrannical and routinely abusive to his subordinates. This not only contributed to low morale but tended to ensure that no bad news would travel up to him. "You would find out you can't tell the truth," said one officer who worked for Franks.

The Iraq war plan Franks had inherited from Zinni called for any invasion force to number some 350,000 troops including three heavy-armor divisions. That plan was swiftly discarded by Rumsfeld in the spring of 2002. Instead he threw on the table as a bargaining chip one retired general's idea that Iraq could be invaded with a force no larger than 10,000 troops, and made the military planners fight for every increase over that.

That we were going to invade Iraq was no longer a question by the summer of 2002. The head of Britain's MI6, Sir Richard Dearlove, returned from conferences with the CIA and other American agencies, and on July 23 told top British officials "[m]ilitary action was now seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were now being fixed around the policy...There was little discussion in Washington of the aftermath after military action."

The planning pushed ahead with very few inside the loop, Ricks writes, beyond Franks and Rumsfeld and occasionally Vice President Cheney and President Bush. The focus was almost totally on taking down Baghdad and Saddam Hussein, with little or no thinking on what the military calls Phase IV operations, or postwar stability and reconstruction.

By late that summer, several voices of reason were trying to be heard—not least of them former NSC director and Bush family friend Brent Scowcroft, who wrote an op-ed piece calling into question the reasons for attacking Iraq, and predicting that any "military campaign very likely would have to be followed by a large-scale, long-term military occupation." In August, Secretary of State Colin Powell, a retired four-star general who had two combat tours in Vietnam, launched a final effort to slow the run-up to war, sitting down with Bush in his residence and quietly telling him: "You are going to be the proud owner of twenty-five million people," Powell said. "You will own all their hopes, aspirations and problems...This will become the first term."

First Cheney, then Rumsfeld, choked off any possibility of debate over the wisdom of action against Iraq, both declaring flatly that there was no question that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction, active programs including nuclear weapons research, that were a threat to us and our few friends in a bad neighborhood. The intelligence to support such assertions, hampered by a near-total lack of human intelligence, was massaged at every level up the chain to make it seem more solid than it was. People like Douglas Feith, who ran a freelance intelligence shop inside the office of the Secretary of Defense, provided Rumsfeld and the administration ever-harder "evidence" of the threat, much of it uncorroborated rumors or outright fabrications previously discarded by other intelligence agencies, and often coming from defectors provided by Ahmad Chalabi.

Later the official administration line would become that no one really foresaw the difficulties of postwar Iraq, Ricks writes, but that was hardly true. On September 4, 2002, Rep. Ike Skelton and 17 other congressional leaders met with

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Bush to discuss Iraq. At the meeting's end Skelton and Bush had a quick private exchange in which Skelton asked the president: "What are you going to do once you get it?" That afternoon, Skelton wrote Bush a letter again putting his questions about the costs and duration of a U.S. occupation of Iraq. He quoted Karl von Clausewitz about the requirement in war "not to take the first step without considering the last," and followed that with another prescient quote from the old Chinese strategy wizard Sun Tzu: "To win victory is easy; to preserve its fruits, difficult."

There was no White House response. Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld were going to take America to war in Iraq, no matter what. On the eve of the war, the Pentagon sent down a brief classified memo declaring that the invasion of Iraq was to be considered an integral part of the global war on terrorism. Ricks reports that when some senior officers questioned that rationale, Lt. Gen. George Casey, director of the Joint Staff, told them it was not open to debate. Indeed, the military intelligence community had gotten the message: "The feeling was...this thing is going to happen," said one senior official. "[I]t wasn't our place to raise a ruckus."

Rumsfeld would whittle down the force even as the invasion was beginning, cutting out one heavy Army division, the 1st Cavalry Division, and delaying the arrival of another, the 1st Armored Division. One of those divisions was earmarked to move into Anbar Province astride the routes to and from Syria. The most likely place for big trouble would, instead, be left to Special Forces teams and so-called economy of force missions. We were going to war in Iraq with about 100,000 fewer troops than the ground commanders believed were needed. We were going without a coherent plan for postwar security. Our political leadership ignored the warnings, choosing to believe the best-case scenario in every case. The rose-colored glasses were firmly affixed to their noses.

Paul Wolfowitz told senior Army officers he thought that within a few months of the invasion, by summer of 2003, American troop levels in Iraq would have been drawn down to only 34,000. This at a time when then-Army chief of staff Gen. Eric Shinseki told a Senate hearing, when pressed, that it would take "several hundred thousand troops" to successfully occupy Iraq. Wolfowitz followed Shinseki to Capitol Hill two days later and derided the general's estimate as "outlandish," adding "I am reasonably certain that they will greet us as liberators and that will help keep our requirements down."

In Ricks's judgment, and that of many other senior officers, there was a total failure of strategic vision in the war plan—a failure partly blamed on Centcom's Gen. Franks, but for the most part tied to Don Rumsfeld's coattails. "In war, strategy is the searchlight that illuminates the way ahead," Ricks concludes. "In its absence, the U.S. military would fight hard and well but blindly, and the noble sacrifices of soldiers would be undercut by the lack of thoughtful leadership at the top."

In the three-week drive that culminated in the triumphant fall of Baghdad, the lack of sufficient forces was swiftly revealed, as Iraqi irregulars surfaced to harass the main force columns, making the bypassed cities and towns a death trap for support units like the maintenance unit ambushed in Nasiriyah. Those who had begged for an armored cavalry regiment and 20 companies of military police to safeguard the long supply lines had been batted down by civilian leaders who had never known combat. The price would be paid in American blood along that route and in the streets of Baghdad.

A week into the fight, Lt. Gen. William Wallace put his finger on another problem that would haunt the American Army forces long after Baghdad had fallen: "The enemy we're fighting is different from the one we'd war-gamed against." Both civilian and military leaders were convinced that with the fall of Baghdad and the Saddam regime, the job was done. But the world was soon treated to scenes of Iraqis looting every government building, every army barracks, every police station and every hospital and power generation station. Secretary Rumsfeld dismissed the images with two words: "Stuff happens!"

In April of 2003 stuff was starting to happen elsewhere in the Sunni heartland, in cities like Fallujah and Saddam's hometown Tikrit, as American occupying forces moved in. On May 1, President Bush flew out to the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln off California and, under that big "Mission Accomplished" banner, declared an end to major combat operations in Iraq.

The opportunity to grasp the situation slipped through American fingers during April and May, and the initiative was lost. The Iraqi insurgency was taking shape, the Syrian border was wide open, munitions and arms dumps with over a million tons of weapons and ammunition were left unguarded and the American forces on the ground, far from beginning to adapt to the changes around them, were already thinking about going home. By April 24, the original U.S. civilian administrator, retired Army Lt. Gen. Jay Garner, and his small staff, had already been ruled failures, undercut by Ahmad Chalabi and his dreams of taking over Iraq. That day, Rumsfeld called Garner to tell him he was being replaced by former ambassador L. Paul Bremer III.

Bremer would almost immediately make critical decisions—some say at the behest of Chalabi—that would feed and fuel the insurgency and unrest. First, Bremer ordered the firings of as many as 85,000 Baath Party members in every government ministry, corporation, university, and hospital. The very people who knew how to run everything were gone. Then he ordered dissolution of the Iraqi Army and police, throwing another 400,000 armed and angry men out of work and disrupting plans by Garner to make use of many of the lower-ranking men for reconstruction work.

Ricks writes that the CIA station chief in Baghdad, as well as Garner and most other members of the U.S. civilian team, objected strongly to Bremer's de-Baathification order, saying it would crip-

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ple efforts to rebuild the infrastructure and disenfranchise the only people who knew how to run the country. Bremer said his orders came from the highest levels—something Ricks indicates was not true. Both Rumsfeld and Bush were puzzled by that order as well as the one dissolving the Iraqi army.

Meanwhile, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz steadfastly denied, over and over, that there was a war still going on in Iraq, or that there was an insurgency. In their eyes the growing violence was just the work of "remnants of the old regime." President Bush made his foolish declaration: "Bring 'em on! We've got the force necessary to deal with the security situation."

Some American division commanders would do very well that first year, especially Maj. Gen. David Petraeus and the 101st Airmobile Division he commanded in Mosul. Others, Ricks writes, would do less well, as they pursued heavy-handed raids, kicking in doors and rounding up and hauling away large numbers of military-aged males to Abu Ghraib prison. Those who were not sympathetic to the insurgency before that experience certainly were afterward. Ricks focuses much of that criticism on the Army's 4th Division and its commander, then-Maj. Gen. Ray Odierno.

Meanwhile, the thousands of Iraqi detainees swept up in raids were dumped on Abu Ghraib and into the care of poorly trained American Army Reservist guards and interrogators whose guidelines crossed the line of abuse. Ricks discloses that an email sent on Aug. 14, 2003 by Capt. William Ponce, an Army intelligence officer in Baghdad, stated that "the gloves are coming off" and asked colleagues for a "wish list" of interrogation techniques. "Back-handed blows to the midsection from a distance of about 18 inches," suggested the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. The 4th Infantry Division was even harsher, calling for "low-voltage electrocution." But an officer in the 1st Armored Division objected, reminding the others that they were American soldiers.

Leadership on the ground in Iraq was roiled and drifting as Rumsfeld ordered the large headquarters of Lt. Gen. Dave McKiernan, who had commanded the charge to Baghdad, to stand down and replaced it with the much smaller and less experienced V Corps staff from Germany, and a brand new corps commander, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez. Ricks lays the strategic and tactical drift of that crucial first year in Iraq at the feet of Sanchez. The general was at odds with Ambassador Bremer and struggling to do his job with a staff that was less than a quarter of the number needed to run what was in essence a four-star headquarters in wartime. But he compounded a bad situation by never really understanding the nature of the insurgency faced by the United States. Counter-insurgency tactics call for less presence of the occupiers, less use of brute force and a deeper understanding of the culture and mores of the civilian population you wish to swing to your side. Every rule was ignored or broken that first year and, the American missteps strengthened the enemy.

The enemy was proving to be ever more adaptable and swift to change tactics to meet changed circumstances even as the Americans seemed to drift aimlessly and the casualty toll for our troops and innocent Iraqis climbed.

Is there no good news at all? Of course there is, and Ricks lays that out as well. At every step of the way there were bright American officers who recognized what was happening, what was going wrong, and wrote and spoke and pleaded passionately for doing the right thing. During 2005 and early 2006, one of the brightest warrior-scholars in the Army, Col. H.R. McMaster, would be sent to Iraq as commander of the 3rd Armored Cavalry. After leaving the Syrian border open for two long years while foreign terrorists crossed into Iraq to become suicide bombers or to be trained in killing Americans, the 3rd ACR was ordered west to shut down the border and clean out towns that had long been under control of the enemy. Now the Americans, at least in this critical area, would begin clearing and holding the area and provide ongoing reliable security to Iraqi citizens. It took a lot of boots on the ground and clever tactics, but a small success was achieved before the Cavalrymen rotated home in March of 2006 and were replaced by another American brigade.

In an afterword titled "Betting Against History," Ricks lays out the possible outcomes in a war now in its fourth year with no foreseeable end in sight. Even the rosiest possible result is hardly anything to cheer, and the worst-case scenarios are chilling, if improbable. An American withdrawal, a breakup of Iraq into three separate countries, the spread of war and instability to the entire region are not the worst possible outcomes in the author's view. He thinks that would be the emergence of a new Iraqi strongman, a Saladin who could lead the rise of a new pan-Arab caliphate, fueling the rise of a new generation of terrorists. Whatever the outcome, Ricks says, Iraq will dominate American foreign policy, and our position in the world, for years to come. Going to war for faulty reasons undercuts everything that follows, especially when those who made the mistakes stubbornly refuse to acknowledge them.

America's credibility has suffered greatly among our allies, as our decision-making ability appears almost fatally flawed under this administration. Worse yet, those who have refused to strengthen our military and locked it into unending deployments in Iraq are creating a sense of weakness that is emboldening our adversaries to act. Does anyone doubt that this was taken into account by Iran's crackpot leaders before ordering their puppet Hezbollah to go on the offensive against Israel? Or by North Korea's Kim Jong Il before he ordered the testing of those middle and long-range missiles?

It's a brutal and foolish mess they've gotten us into, Ollie.

Joseph Galloway writes a nationally syndicated column on military and national-security affairs, and is co-author of *We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young*.

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Ask the federal government about science these days and you can rely on getting an eccentric, White House approved answer. But, lest we forget, isn't it time we singled out a few agencies that have worked especially hard to compromise themselves? *The Washington Monthly's* Kook Awards are our overdue tribute. Of course, not everyone can win, but we remind the runners-up that it's an honor just to be nominated.

The Monthly's KOOK AWARDS

GOLD

Environmental Protection Agency

• From 1997 to 2001, the EPA's annual report on air pollution included a section on global warming. In 2002, the section on climate change disappeared for good.

• In 2003, the EPA published "The State of the Environment," billed as a comprehensive report. In response to White House complaints, the EPA removed the entire section on global warming.

• In 2000, James Titus, an EPA expert on rising sea levels, wrote an essay called "Does the US Government Realize That the Sea is Rising?" In June 2006, when *The New York Times* tried to talk with him, Titus told the reporter that he was no longer allowed to talk about the issue publicly.

Silver

Centers for Disease Control

• In November 2002, the CDC website removed a fact sheet on proper condom use and replaced it with a document emphasizing condom failure.

•In 1992, the CDC started providing information to state and local governments about the latest scientific studies on effective sex education programs through an initiative called "Programs that Work." Studies found that abstinence-only sexual education did not change teen sexual behavior. "Programs that Work" was dissolved in 2002.

Bronze

Food and Drug Administration

In 1999, the National Academy of Sciences released a report calling marijuana "moderately well suited for particular conditions, such as chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting and AIDS wasting." In April 2006, the FDA stated in a press release that "no sound scientific studies supported medical use of marijuana for treatment in the United States."

Honorable Mentions

Office of Population Affairs

In March of 2005, the Department of Health and Human Services launched the website 4parents.gov to help teens make healthy choices about sex. It provides no information on using condoms as a contraceptive.

National Cancer Institute

In March 2002, the National Cancer Institute posted a fact sheet on its website stating that recent studies have found no link between abortion and breast cancer. In June 2002, the fact sheet disappeared. By November 2002, the fact sheet resurfaced with the message that the results of the studies were inconclusive. (After a public outcry from scientists, the original information was reposted.) – *Lucy Kennedy*

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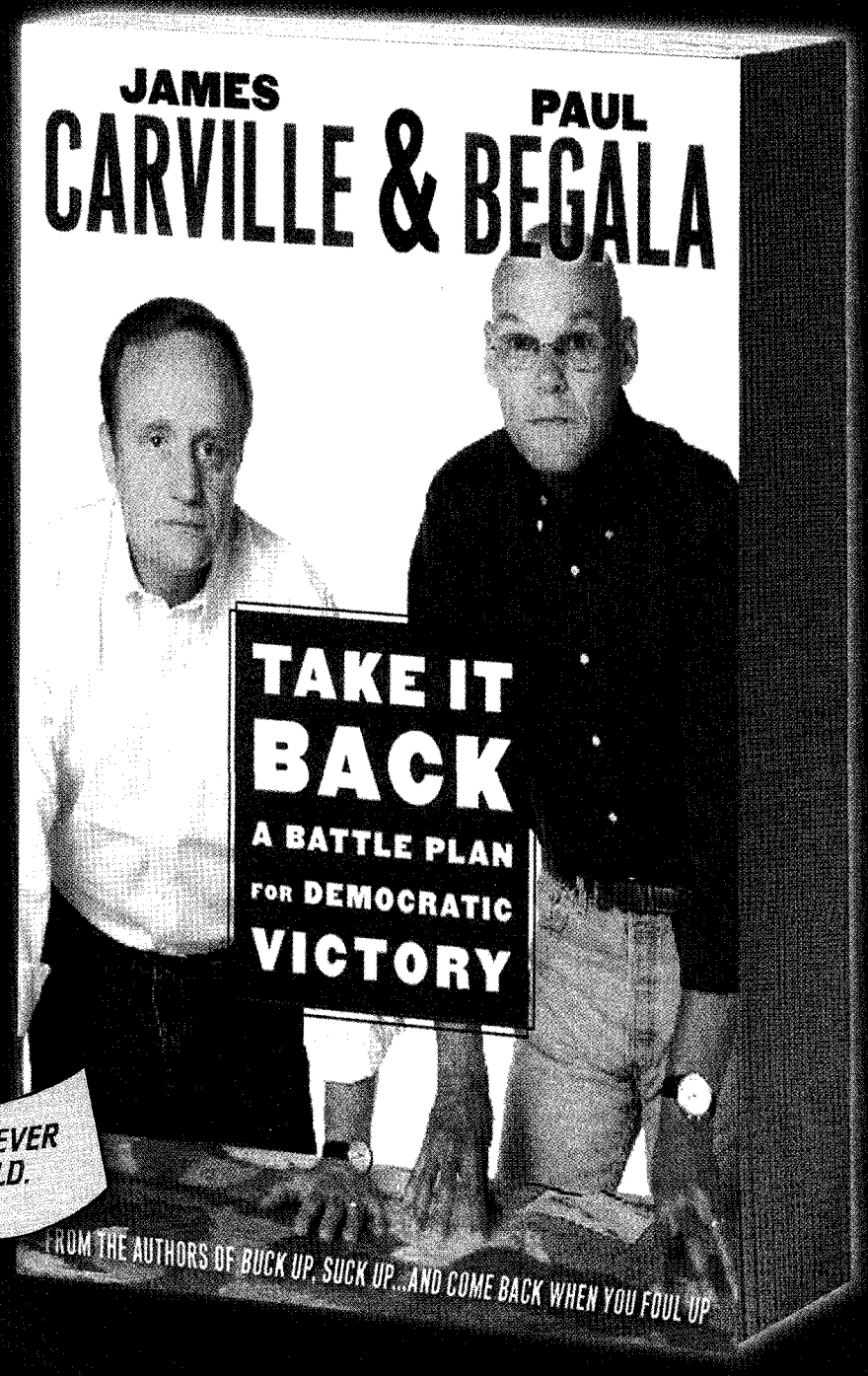

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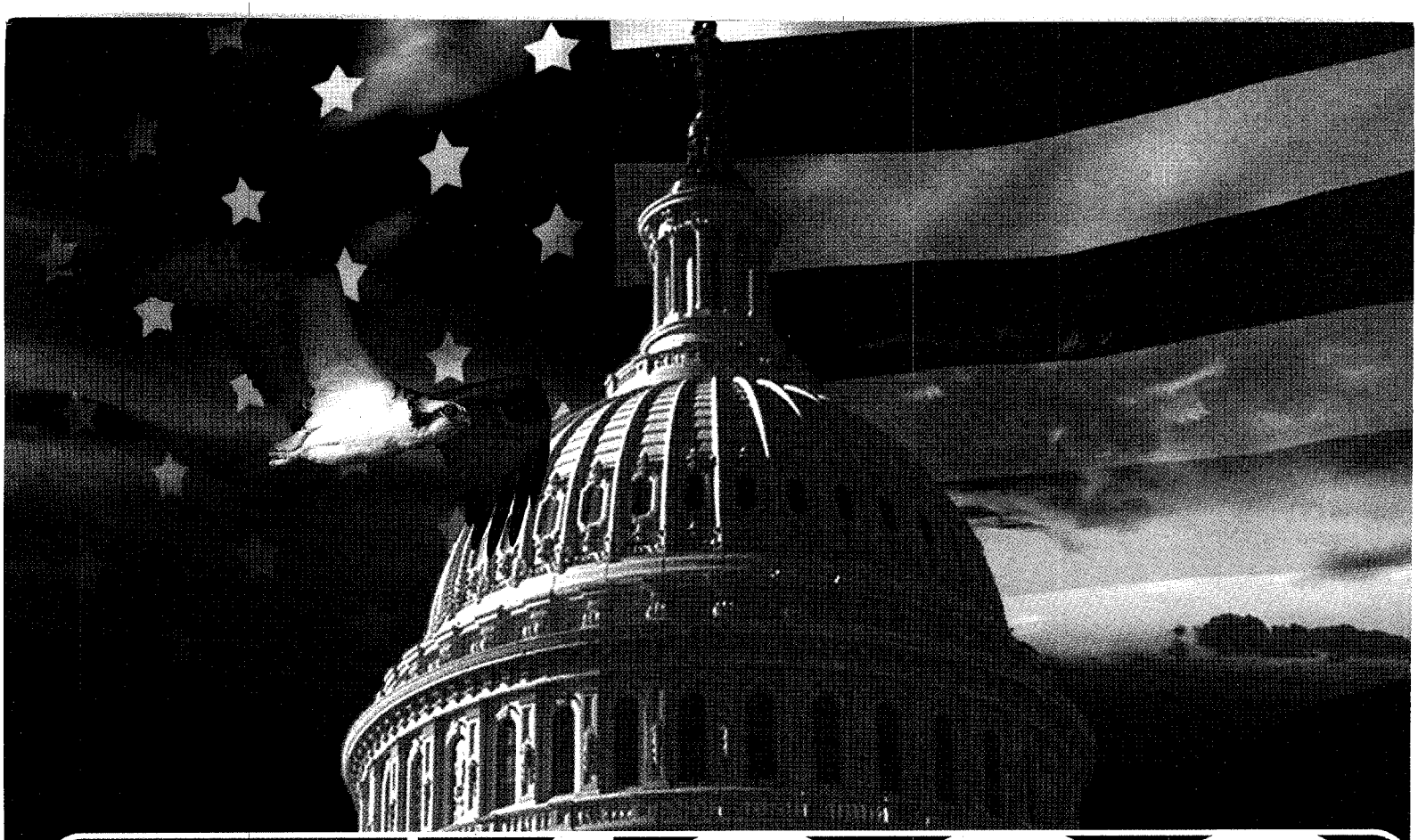

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